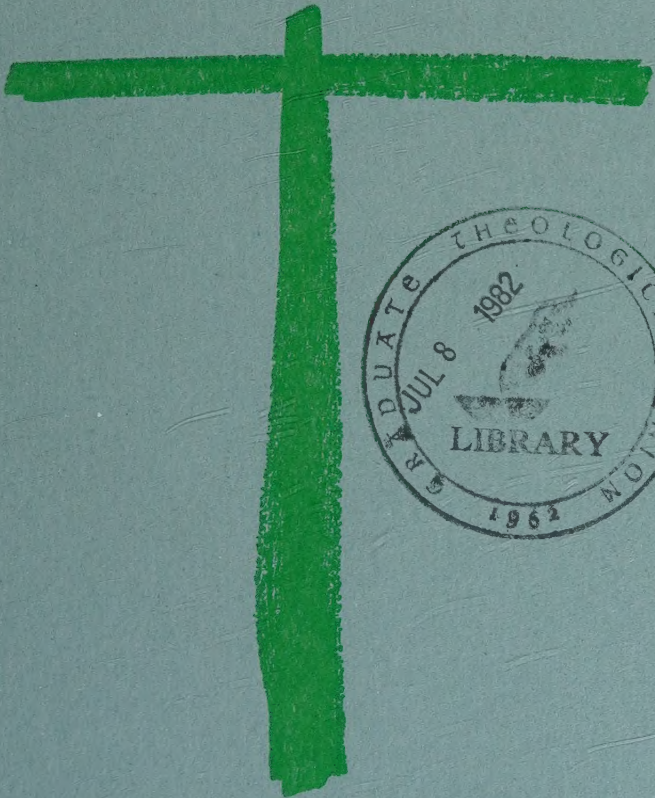


Francis and the Arts

The Franciscan



**VOLUME XXIV
NUMBER 2**

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MAY, 1982

The Society of Saint Francis

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Minister General : Brother Geoffrey S.S.F.

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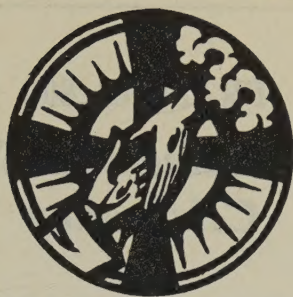
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Pax et bonum.

THE FRANCISCAN

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Fourteenth century stained glass, Königsfeld, Switzerland.

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Francis and the Arts



MAN'S artistic faculty spans the gulf between intellect and senses, forming a vehicle for the creative instinct, that activity of love which is both a search for ultimate meaning and the proof of our inclusion within that meaning.

Augustine struggled with concepts of natural goodness and interpretation of personal experience until grace prevailed: Bernard of Clairvaux recognised that a person must be *affected* in the totality of his being before he could go beyond himself to find fulfilment in the source and end of all that is: and the writings of both these saints are examples of a particularly sublime art form where intellectual activity is permeated by a love which cauterizes sensuality to the point of ecstasy.

But from Francis came the simpler and at the same time profound melody of a sensual nature offered in harmony with all created things in an earthly agony which had to burst into praise. In his spirituality, the whole self is expressed in his response to God as he unconsciously extends the theory of his predecessors. In him the strain of passionate nature fuses with spiritual stress, the movement of thought combining with emotions and temperament in evoking and expressing devotion. With him the cosmos groans in darkly contemplative labour or flashes with inspired vision.

Here, art and creativity become worship, and it is this essentially human element which makes Francis at the same time an attractive subject in the world of art and an impelling stimulus to Christian discipleship down the centuries.

As Gerard Manley Hopkins put it, 'Man' when he offers the whole of himself in exience, 'acts in God's eyes what in God's eye he is—Christ'. Creators and artists throughout history have found in their several media the outlet for every facet of man's nature, giving form not only to their own rare dreams and the captured waves of other men's imaginings; but also to reflections of the divine image whose co-creators we are and whose inspiration invigorates our dumb reproductions. In our worshipful self-expression we strive to reach his height, to be an icon of Christ, as Francis was.

The Minister General's Letter

My dear friends,

So many good things are coming from our Conference 'The Gospel Now' and most of all we are seeing evidence of resurrection. The Gospel is about resurrection—rising from death. In periods of difficulty the Church often reacts by withdrawal, protecting itself and concentrating on survival. Our Society can do this too. The Good News is of a love that is defenceless and vulnerable, a love that dies and is raised. I was so pleased when I visited our American Province to take part in their General Chapter that their theme was 'A Spirituality for Resurrection, not Survival'. To concentrate on protecting ourselves and simply surviving is not what the Gospel is about. The Gospel is that we are raised from the dead, having died.

Our American brothers had been through a period of great pain and difficulty. Many of them saw no hope for the future and were in a state of death. But they gathered around our Lord Jesus Christ. There were healings of memories and relationships, there was renewed commitment to our life under vows, a renewed reaching out in love, a new sharing, even a moving out to consider new forms of ministry, so that the risen Christ rose in their hearts.

I am writing this during my visit to the Province of Australia and New Zealand. Here again there has been much pain and fear, a death situation. But when I got there I found renewed spiritual life, a commitment to our Lord in prayer and worship, an atmosphere of love and joy in the friary, healing and repentance, and many good things happening.

The European Province has recently had a Chapter meeting at which they have looked searchingly and honestly at the life and ministry in the friaries in the light of Gospel imperatives, and in the changing situation in Britain today. They, too, had experienced much pain. But they have responded to the urgent needs of others in sending a brother to the Solomon Islands and two to Zimbabwe for short periods to give necessary help, and this in spite of their own great needs, so experiencing new life through sacrifice. So far I have not visited the Pacific Islands Province, but from all I hear it is producing a number of young professed who are looking for adventure and who are committed to the Kingdom.

Another sign of resurrection is the way our Franciscan Aid Fund is developing, and resulting in a real sharing with the Third World.

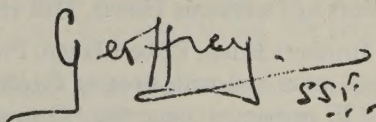
Several of our Franciscan houses, and numbers of our Tertiaries, Companions and friends have contributed, and already we have had calls on the fund from different parts of the world. Perhaps the most moving appeal has come from Lesotho where we have begun to respond to a desperate situation. The pattern of Church life given to us in Acts 2: 43—45 is of a Church not called to poverty but rather to share what they had so that everyone had enough, and those who had gave to those who had not. This is how we see Franciscan Aid. In our small way we want to share what we have with those who are destitute, for this we must do if we are to be real brothers and sisters. The interesting thing is that once you start doing this, even in a quite small way, others begin to catch fire too, and I have already had some experience of this in Australia.

My deep conviction is that in our Society we are at the beginning of a new Gospel initiative of the Holy Spirit which will take us, if we allow it, far beyond what we ever imagined or thought possible. I am convinced God has called us for this present time, and if we will but continue this Gospel pattern we will be used mightily by God to bring new hope and resurrection to a world heading for destruction and in a situation of death.

This will happen not because we are super people, or gifted people or better people, but because we are very ordinary people who are trying to commit ourselves to God more completely and follow Christ more closely. Like S. Francis we are to be men and women possessed by God and moving into God's future, which is his Kingdom. I am reminded of some words of G. K. Chesterton written in an essay on the British jury system:

‘Whenever our civilisation wants a library to be catalogued or a solar system discovered, it has its specialists. But when it wishes anything done which is really serious, it collects twelve of the ordinary men standing round. The same thing was done, if I remember, by the founder of Christianity’.

May Christ give us the grace to live the Gospel.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey', with a stylized flourish extending from the end. To the right of the signature, the initials 'SSF' are written in a smaller, less formal hand.

Minister General.

Chronicle

Brother Anselm writes:

EUROPEAN PROVINCE I am writing to you from Freeland, where I am chaplain for the month of March to the sisters of our Second Order, the Community of Saint Clare. The chance came my way as a result of Brother Antonio's departure last year to the U.S.A. (he is ministering to the Japanese in San Francisco), and I won't say too much about it as the nature of the enclosed contemplative life which the sisters follow leads them to shun much publicity. However, a very generous ministry of hospitality is carried on here in the Old Parsonage next door to the convent—and the peace and joy of Freeland are thus available to a widening circle of friends. I hasten to add that they do need to book well in advance!

In February it was my privilege to attend a consultation of Roman Catholic and Anglican religious superiors. This group of three men and three women of each obedience has now met three times and (certainly as far as those actually present are concerned) has succeeded in dispelling the suspicion based on ignorance which colours so much of our thought and feeling about each other, and laying a foundation of understanding and love for future relationships with our brothers and sisters in the religious life. It is hoped that from this groundwork we shall go on to plan such prayer and action together as is compatible with our loyalty to Christ in our different traditions. In particular, all Anglican religious and their friends are called on to pray for God's blessing on the visit of Pope John Paul II to our country, which will take place very soon after this issue of *THE FRANCISCAN* appears.

Our meeting took place at Mill Hill, and I must admit that that (in prospect) seemed a lot further away than the venue for our S.S.F. Ministers' Meeting which should be in progress when you read this, at Haruro in Papua New Guinea! There, we shall all be members of one community, united by a single commitment to the way of Saint Francis in our Anglican Communion. Pray that the Holy Spirit's blessing will be as evident among us as it was among the 'separated' brothers and sisters at Damascus House, Mill Hill.

Brothers Brian, Robert Hugh, Philip and Anselm will be sharing with each other and with Brother Geoffrey what has been happening in the S.S.F. provinces since the 'Gospel Now' conference at Hilfield last year. I shall be able to say that our Provincial Chapters (all of them)

have set in motion a thorough review of our lives (individual and corporate) in the light of the gospel, that there is clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's work among us, and that our vocation as a Franciscan community set in contemporary British society has become more sharply defined. As you read our 'Chronicle' I hope that you will detect the direction in which the Spirit is nudging us—and I do ask for your continued prayers as we seek to be faithful to his inspiration in the service of Christ and his poor.

Mother Elizabeth writes:

PADDINGTON C.S.F. By the time you read this, most of the work on the new house in St. Michael's Street will be done and we shall soon be able to move in. This is not going to be a Provincial Headquarters; but to facilitate my travelling around, I shall be based there, so I hope that, in general, my correspondence, together with community and business matters which I deal with as bursar, will find their way there.

Sister Pauline has been staying in the brothers' house in Orsett Terrace for the last few months, getting to know the area and trying work prospects. At the time of writing, she has just started part-time nursing in a nearby Community Home, recently set up. With one or two changes of personnel and other contingencies, I have to wait till the last minute to assign two more sisters to the house; and we hope to be able to accommodate a guest or two. Please do come and see us!

We have had one or two offers of furniture and/or books and hope to be in touch soon with the kind donors. We are sorry for the delay and do thank you for all your offers of assistance.

Brother Bernard writes:

HILFIELD Swopping stories about the blizzards gets boring, since everyone had a bad time. We were without electricity and phone and apologise to those who were frustrated. Father David Campbell came and conducted a retreat for the half of us that was able to get here and we were glad that Brother Barnabas was with us. Now the crocuses and daffodils are out and Spring will at least cover over the vast damage to the trees and countryside.

Ramon has been with us during this time and in mid-March begins six months' solitude in a hut in a concealed part of the Friary. It has been fun looking round for places and we are grateful to the many friends who made offers. We have got to know the Othona Community at Burton Bradstock which has been a joy. While at Canterbury Ramon did a sponsored jog and with the help of friends from Spurgeon's College has a complete set of Kittel's Wordbook, which is going into the library. We shall give him a volume a month in his solitude to work through! He will also grow food, make sandals, bind books and pray—so he won't be idle. His prayer will be a blessing to us all.

New Guest-Brother. Our guests over the years will be grateful to Brother Angelo for his meticulous attention and care and for his efficiency and competence. He has been a great friend to many. After four years, he is moving to the Canterbury

House and we wish him well in his new ministry. Brother Colin Wilfred (with the help of Brother Christopher) will now be responsible for the care of our guests; he is already known to many of you.

Visitors, campers, etc. We are getting the place ready for the Spring and Summer activities. We had to repair the big Crucifix which stands half-way down the hill and are making a welcome board for by the car park. We hope that people who come to this lovely part of the world will call and see us. We have good instructions about how to find us, if you write for them—the main thing is not to start from Cerne Abbas (as the Irishman said when asked the way ‘well if I were you, I shouldn’t start from here’). Our nearest hamlets are Batcombe and Hilfield; our nearest towns Sherborne, Dorchester, Yeovil. We are having to limit organised groups to two a week and to fit campers on the field at judicious intervals. We are thankful to have such a lovely place to share. Many too find the Spirit of the Lord and of prayer here, which is a great joy.

Successful operations. Roger has had a long-delayed operation, which put him in hospital over Christmas, but he is now well recovered. Gordon was in Southampton for a hiatus hernia operation and we are relieved that he looks so much better now that he is back. He does a lot with visitors here in the summer, as well as his outside work and it will be wonderful if he is fully fit again.

North-South exchange. Richard had an itch for the North and had his chance when the Minister asked him to help out there while David Stephen comes to us for the six months from early March. David Stephen is going to look after the work of the Friary and it is a special boon, because Brian Thomas, who has been so expert on the garden side of things, is moving off from us also in March. Brian Thomas is in the midst of the part-time course for the Non-Stipendary Ministry and is greatly enjoying and benefitting from the course. He has asked for a period of leave to consider his future and we shall know better by the next FRANCISCAN how it is going to work out. Brian Thomas has given a great deal to this Friary and the villages around and will be greatly missed. David Stephen is no stranger to this Friary and we are very grateful that he will be with us.

Sharing with the Solomons. More like the Brandt North-South exchange was Samuel’s visit to the Solomons, which he greatly enjoyed. He is back looking brown and full of renewed spiritual vigour; he is very grateful for all he learned there. We shall look for its fruits in his time as Novice Guardian and note that canoe training and fishing now appear in the novice training programme. Steven and Alan have moved on from here after their time as novices; we hope that Christopher Taylor and David Johnstone will be clothed by the time you read this. Novice training is an important part of our life and needs constant prayer and we are grateful to our friends for this as for the other ways in which they help us. The opportunities for our Society all over the world are manifold; it is a great responsibility to make people aware of their vocation and to help them come and live it out.

Local Mini-Mission. Raymond Christian and Ian Andrew went with Ramon to the village of Kilminster near Axminster and, from reports received, took it by storm. Many worked and prayed hard for it and we join our thanksgiving with theirs. Before Christmas a group of novices went to Portland Borstal for the weekend; we welcome the new Chaplain there and look for continued exchanges. We continue to help in our local parishes and at Hooke and Compton.

Quiet Days and the like. The programme here of quiet days and discussion days has been well supported. We send information to those who live within fifty miles of the Friary. If you are one of these but do not have the information in your FRANCISCAN please let us know. Bernard has also done a School of Prayer in the Cathedral at Salisbury and gave some talks at Post Green recently and all of us find people who are wanting to know more about prayer. Colin Wilfred is doing a day on 'Praying the Psalms'; Christopher on 'Getting the best out of Holy Week'.

People in need. The annual figures show that the average number of wayfarers a night is now nearer four than five. Of course it isn't regular and we sometimes have twelve, fifteen or at Christmas twenty. People often ask us if there are more young men on the road because of the appalling unemployment situation and certainly young men do come but many are in their 30s, and upwards. It is very sad to see old and sometimes sick men on the road, especially in the bad weather. We are aware that we are able to help only to an extent; we wish we could do more. Likewise in Bernard House we are glad that we can take people who need respite for one reason or another. Again, we get many more requests than we can cope with. But some very good things have happened in that house and we are delighted that Brother Christopher has now moved over from Hooke and looks after it. We were glad to welcome back Peter Whatcoat a former member of that house and to find him so much better. Talking of welcoming old friends, it was a great delight to have Len Howard here with some of his young people from Sweden. He was in great form.

Bishop John Austin Baker. We were all delighted at his election to Salisbury and that he came here for a week's retreat before his consecration. He will celebrate and preach at the Stigmata Festival on Saturday 18 September at noon. In the afternoon we are hoping that a Roman Catholic Friar will speak: more details in May.

Francis 800. As previously announced, both our summer festival and Compton's will this year be at Wells Cathedral on Saturday, 10 July. No need to book or write just come in coach loads to Wells for 10.30 a.m. We shall go singing into the Cathedral for a Eucharist at 11 a.m., celebrated by the Bishop of Taunton. There will be no sermon in words, but the Sacred Dance Group will dance a message. Bernard will introduce the day after the Eucharist and there will be lots of music by the Fisher Folk and acting by Lee Abbey members and exhibitions by all kinds of communities and groups. In the afternoon there will be workshops and seminars. We hope that our friends from far and near will make it a day to remember.

Dates. The Families Camp: 30 July to 9 August. The Youth Camp: 13 to 23 August. The Youth Camp is designed for those of nearly fifteen or over (up to twenty-five). Philip Bartholomew is taking bookings at Hilfield. The Families Camp is pretty full already, but enquiries should be made to Canon Norman Hill, The Vicarage, Crowhurst, Limpsfield, Surrey.

Brother Giles writes:

HARBLEDOWN There are only three things to mention this time. First, that Brother Angelo has come from Hilfield to replace Brother Ramon who has now moved to Hilfield. We are sorry to lose Ramon, but know that his time at Hilfield will be very important for him and for the Society. We welcome Angelo in his place, he will be a great help in all our ministries. Justin

has now been able to take up chaplaincy work in the prison at Canterbury, and also works with an organisation called Mustard Seed, a day centre for those who have had psychiatric illness.

Second, a slight re-ordering of the chapel in the friary has made a great difference to its atmosphere and utility. We are now considering the pattern of prayer and worship which we have in the friary to see if a greater stability of time and place will help our corporate life.

Third, we would like to remind our friends in the south-east of England of two regular opportunities to meet with us: every Wednesday at Greyfriars, Stour Street, Canterbury, we have Midday Prayer at 12.45 p.m., the Eucharist at 1 p.m. and then a picnic lunch; every first Saturday in the month (except October) we have a Franciscan Fraternity at the friary from 12 noon to 7 p.m. with a Eucharist at 12.30 p.m. Also we would like to advertise the Franciscan Family Day at Cranbrook parish church and hall on Saturday, 24 July, beginning at 12 noon with a Eucharist. The preacher will be the Bishop of Lewes. Bring your own food for a picnic lunch afterwards. There will also be a service in Canterbury Cathedral on Sunday, 3 October at 6.30 p.m. to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the birth of S. Francis.

Brother David Jardine writes:

BELFAST I was very encouraged recently when talking to one of our tertiaries, an English lady who has worked over in Ireland for something like ten years now. She said that she considered her ministry over here to be a work of reparation for the sins of her fellow-countrymen in the past in Ireland. I was very encouraged to hear that coming from an English person because I believe that in Ireland we have inherited a problem which was not of our making. It was created by English government policies over the centuries, but we people in Northern Ireland have borne a tremendous amount of suffering because of this problem. I can understand why English people do grow a little weary of the trouble in Northern Ireland. Maybe those who are weary of it could just remember that it was their fellow-countrymen who created the problem in the first place. So I am asking people in England to approach the Irish problem with three attitudes—humility, repentance and prayer. It is only when we approach God with an attitude of humility and repentance that He can use us as instruments of peace, instruments of healing.

People often ask me about how they can make some contribution to reconciliation in Ireland. Practical schemes are obviously necessary, but not everyone can get involved in these. However, everyone can pray, and this is the vital contribution. Four months ago I drew up an intercession leaflet for work in Crumlin Road prison. I have given out three hundred and fifty of these leaflets and already I can see how God has responded to the prayers of His people. Christian work is really going well in Crumlin Road at the moment. When I went to work there in 1975 there were three men claiming to be committed Christians. Today there are more than forty. I can only say that the Spirit of God is moving in a way that it was not only a few years ago. I would also like to thank the Sisters at Freeland for their prayer support, and especially my old friend, Sister Gwenda Mary. She has been praying consistently for certain individual prisoners and I have seen the difference that this has made to the lives of some men.

In the Province as a whole I believe that prayer has been important as well. One of the worst problems we have ever had was the hunger-strike crisis last year. But millions of Christians all over the world were praying about that situation. We survived, the trouble was not as bad as we thought it was going to be, and now I am sure that the prayers of the faithful contributed to that.

I do not want to finish this in a vacuum after talking about the importance of prayer, so I am going to give you some people and things to pray for:

For the brothers—Damian, Hubert, Peter Timothy, Benjamin, William Henry and David Jardine—that we really may be instruments of peace in Ireland . . .

For reconciliation—between Protestant and Catholic, between North and South, between Ireland and England. Whatever hurts and divisions there have been in the past, we must not dwell on them, but pray for and work for God's healing . . .

For the renewal movement in all the churches—pray for the service of renewal on the first Friday of each month at 7.30 p.m.—these services are attended by Christian people of all denominations and are a preparation for a service on Pentecost Sunday for Christians from all over Ireland . . .

For Christian work in Crumlin Road prison—I can send you our intercession leaflet if you write to me . . .

For those who suffer—when you read in the paper of someone bereaved, seriously injured, or sent to prison for a long time, cut out the article and use it in your intercessions . . .

Do not forget to give thanks to God for what He has done already, and do not neglect this important ministry of intercession for Ireland.

‘If my people who are called by my Name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will forgive them their sin and heal their land’.

Brother Victor writes:

PLAISTOW All the brothers here would like to record our deep appreciation of Brother Julian's year with us. His quiet energy and integrity of vision gave us all a renewed sense of direction as a house. We wish him well at Glasshampton.

Brother Steven is now with us for a year. He is doing a course of study, and is involved in teaching English to Asian families in the area.

Sadly, Brother Fred has been having quite a rough time lately. He has been in and out of hospital for a number of operations, but is remarkably cheerful, and still master of our accounts.

We have recently acquired from Glasshampton a wooden altar that was used by Father William S.D.C. It has not been used by them as an altar for a considerable time, and it is quite appropriate that it should come here, to a house of which William was at one time the Superior. We would like to thank Glasshampton for their kindness in giving it to us.

As many of you are aware, the London Rally this year is on 2 October, and it is to be a major celebration of the 800th anniversary of the birth of S. Francis. It will be in Westminster Central Hall as usual. We have been aware over the past two or

three years of a reduction in the numbers of people at this Rally. If anyone has any ideas on how this event could be re-vitalised Brother Victor would be very pleased to hear from you.

Before Brother Julian left here, he and I were involved in collecting signatures for a disarmament petition in a local market. The response was remarkably good, and some of the comments were priceless. Among them were, 'Well it (the Bomb) is gonna be dropped sooner or later, aint it mate, and the sooner it happens the better', and, 'I hope they drop it today. Get rid of the likes of you'. How do you answer that?

Brother Alban writes:

GLASSHAMPTON There are few guests around the turn of the year, but a group of local clergy braved the snow and ice to keep a quiet day in the house. Most of their time was spent in the guest parlour with a good log fire, for oil supplies were running low and heat was in short supply. However we had much less to complain of than many others.

Other quiet day groups have been the deanery of Himley, conducted by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, and a group from Hereford led by Prebendary Neil Collings.

Brethren from other houses come and go month by month, each making his particular contribution to the life of the house. Brothers Harry, Cuthbert and James William each left a distinctive personal impression which was afterwards missed. But there are more to come.

Mark Nicholas has spent a week with us in preparation for his profession in March. Others from Gillott Road have found their way over here from time to time and even some from Trafalgar Road for brief visits.

Julian, after his time in Plaistow, has found his way into the kitchen here, and Alan is taking a long look at the electrical wiring. Andrew David has been busy constructing new library shelves, giving the books room enough to expand.

Both the Friars and the congregation of Saint Bene't's were privileged to begin the Lenten season with a Quiet Evening, after the Mass and Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, conducted by the Guardian of the Third Order, Mrs. Mary Johnson. We will remember for a long time her challenging and yet encouraging words to us.

Brother Christian continues his studies at Corpus Christi College. At the time of writing he hopes to attend the Ordination to the Episcopacy of Father Maurice Couve de Murville, our near neighbour at Fisher House, the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy. Father Couve de Murville has been a friend of Saint Francis House during his time in Cambridge and we congratulate him and promise our prayers as he is ordained Archbishop of Birmingham on the Feast of the Annunciation.

Brother Martin and Brother Edgar continue in their respective pastoral work in Parish and Hospital, unspectacular work which demands faithfulness, patience and lots of love—shown in quiet everyday ways.

Brother Paschal's Scottish accent is now heard in Saint Bene't's as he takes his share of regular preaching at the Sung Eucharist. This Lent term he has also had the

opportunity to occupy various College Chapel pulpits and experience generous hospitality and 'un-Franciscan Fare' at High Table! He hopes to continue work with students, thus following in the steps of previous Brothers.

'Snow never settles here. It melts while it falls in the sea air'. But **LLANDUDNO** gone for ever was that local boast as cars were abandoned on the dual-carriageway near the friary, and disappeared rapidly under drifts. Snow ploughs opened the roads, including that between us and Brother James in the old folks' hospital in Conwy. But it would not melt; it remained as a literal seven days' wonder. It was beautiful and none of us minded, except for Brother Raphael. Snowed *in* to Llandudno is snowed *out* of Lampeter: and *that* had virtually disappeared.

Brother Silyn is back to something like full strength having been persuaded with difficulty to take it easy, if only for a season. We still marvel at his being known simply everywhere in Wales. Brother Nathanael is on that path too on account of his skill in the Welsh language. Sister Sheila goes on organizing games at the school down the road. Conservative friars have almost accepted that nuns are never again to be seen 'dressed properly', but sports gear . . .! Sister Hilary has no time for our nonsense. She inveighs against traditional ideas of the female role—then throws herself into doing just that, keeping the kitchen and domestic affairs firmly in order. Though Brother Vincent's primary task is to direct such an unlikely array of individuals, to cope with demands from beyond the house (the telephone usually wants him) and to juggle with the diary, it is not surprising that he frequently feels himself called to minister to the silent vegetation in the furthest reaches of the garden. *He* sees to the ornamental variety. The *food* that grows is Brother Silyn's special care.

Mostly Brother Raphael is far away in the Cambrian Mountains where he looks after spiritual welfare in the university college at Lampeter throughout each term. Running the chapel is easy with five assisting priests and a lot of very talented students. He is not, as reported, *Anglican* chaplain, but appointed to serve *all* the college folk. Just Chaplain, plain and unqualified! In such a place the Lord is not likely to be bored! He is offered guitar songs, cathedral-like choral services, dance and drama, poetry readings, hand-clappy renewal spots, solemn high masses, extempore prayer meetings, and silent vigils. That all this happens so easily means that the chaplain is free to respond to the continual needs of the thousand college folk, of whom nearly eight hundred are students. Many of the latter are coming into contact for the first time with the sacraments, celebrated by a keen and questing community. There are a surprising number of first confessions, for example. The greatest joy is the observable spiritual growth of students as they learn (often from one another) what great things the Lord does. For bright, open-minded youngsters here the gospel continues to be Good News.

Sister Teresa writes:

COMPTON DURVILLE Our Community Week in January coincided with the big freeze, so, like it or not, we were snow-bound until it thawed. Gone were our plans for outings and diversions, and instead we were dominated by forces beyond our control, so we decided to enjoy them. A fresh sense of our togetherness in community came as we sat round a peat fire (the radiators

were cold) enjoying soup cooked on a primus, by candlelight. We found all sorts of means to keep the patients warm and fed. Milk was available from the local farm, and we fared better than most. People helped each other and shared what they had, and the richness of our life came home to us. We made full use of the time available and had a whole marathon of house-meetings, and then remembered to write down what we had decided. Now the guests have returned—nearly two thousand of them last year—and we have settled down to our usual comings and goings.

Mother Elizabeth is in America for a six-week visit; Eleanor Bridget has been home to New Zealand calling in at San Francisco on both the journeys; and Nan is shortly off to South Africa for leave with her family. On her return in April her mother will be with her and her First Profession is expected to take place on 21 April.

Plans for the Paddington House are going ahead, and it looks as if it may be ready for occupation in the summer.

There will be no Open Day at Compton Durville this year: instead, we shall all be going to join in the Festival at Wells Cathedral on 10 July.

There cannot have been many times that we have written in
TOYNBEE HALL the Chronicle to say that we have had a period of stability.

But since you last heard from us we have really begun to feel relaxed in our situation here. The four of us have been together now for quite a while and as a response to the questions posed by the 'Gospel Now' we went away for a weekend to a house lent to us by some friends. We were able to work hard at reviewing our lifestyle and made some significant observations. The hard work of the last three years is beginning to bear fruit; we have become an accepted part of Toynbee and are well received throughout the Deanery. We must now look to the way forward whatever that may be.

Christmas was as usual a busy time for us beginning as it does here around October. Once again we were able to help with the Christmas Day lunch for those who had nowhere else to go. That was a good day. It was followed the next day by the first arrivals for the Taizé Pilgrimage of Reconciliation. We had a husband and wife team from Belgium to help organise things in Toynbee and about eighty young people were based with us for the week. We had representatives from Germany, Yugoslavia, France, Hong Kong, and Poland. Our friends in the area responded beyond all expectations. Most pilgrims were accommodated with Bengali families. The day began with prayer in local churches and then in the mornings we had workshops in the area on housing, police accountability, unemployment and racism. The pilgrims were catered for centrally for the rest of the day with midday prayers in the cathedrals, workshops, meals and then the climax of each day, in which we also participated, the evening worship. Can you imagine twenty thousand praying together?

Hannah and Simon Peter both had to do their normal work during the week and so we were fortunate to have Pauline, on her way to Paddington, and Graham, on loan from Hilfield, to help out.

On New Year's Eve we had a vigil of prayer in the Toynbee basement which we had made into a worship area. New Year's Day was the day for farewells and once again the Bengalis pulled all the stops out and cooked a magnificent curry for about

one hundred and fifty people. We are grateful for all the help and support that we received from our friends.

Life is now more or less back to normal. We are trying not to be too busy and that is quite hard. However we do seem to be being called to a greater stillness—a stillness in the heart and hustle and bustle of this great city. Pray for us.

Brother Jonathan writes:

ALNMOUTH Summer Events. We begin our summer festivals with the Youth Day on Saturday, 22 May. This is followed by the Children's Day on Saturday, 12 June. Finally, the Open Day itself on Saturday, 26 June. On this occasion Terry Burke, the Project Leader of SHOT will be speaking to us about the homeless on Tyneside. Elsewhere in *THE FRANCISCAN* is a list of some of our events over the next six months. I specially draw the attention of all former members of the Northern Camp—both at Wooler and Budle Bay—to the Sixtieth anniversary celebration at the Friary on 6 August. We really do want to see you on this day!

Au Revoir and Welcome. In March we said au revoir to David Stephen who has gone to Hilfield for seven months to help the brothers there at a busy time. In his place we welcome most gladly Brother Richard, who has only ever made two visits to Alnmouth before—and he arrived in February too! Brave man.

Ecumenical Dimension. We have been pleased recently to deepen our relationships with Christians of other churches in this locality. Both Edmund and Keith have preached at the small Methodist chapel in the village. Marcus, in the week of Prayer for Christian Unity, took the service and preached at the Baptist Church in Alnwick. This was closely followed by a visit to the Church of Scotland's Women's Guild in Berwick. Brother Jonathan is looking forward during a visit to Assisi and Rome in February, with the parishioners of S. Francis, High Heaton, to renewing old friendships with our Roman Catholic brethren and making new ones.

Conferences, Retreats and Visits. A wide-ranging number of retreats and meetings have been held at the Friary since the last issue of *THE FRANCISCAN*. Among them were a sixth form conference in November under David Stephen's expert eye; a retreat for clergy, without addresses, which was packed out; an important consultation on Women and Ministry and a weekend on charismatic renewal. Early in the new year, despite the weather, a goodly number of people came for a weekend on prayer led by David Stephen—the membership was predominantly young which was rather encouraging.

Out in the vineyard. A great many of us have been involved in outside preaching just lately and especially parish missions. Peter Douglas with a local team went to Holy Trinity, Cookridge, Leeds for a children's mission and Jonathan, with a powerful team, was at S. Mary's, Monkseaton for their Celebration of the Faith. Keith spent the month of January to February on Holy Island at the invitation of the vicar, Dennis Bill, meeting the island population. We are having to be rather more careful, though, about outside engagements—with so much happening in the Friary itself and also more groups wanting to come here. It is not easy having to say 'no'—but it is absolutely necessary if we are not to feel 'swamped'.

Schools. We have been glad to continue with our ministry in schools. David Stephen went to Sedbergh in November, the first Franciscan visit for sometime. We are receiving a large number of invitations to visit comprehensive schools in the

area and try as far as possible to respond to all of these. Keith went down to Canford School in Dorset to share in a sixth form project on the Brandt Report.

Our own life. A fairly quiet Christmas gave us an opportunity to be together as a family which we really treasured. January was also fairly quiet with not too many outside engagements or guests, and despite the fact that we had, like everybody else, to battle with the weather, enjoyed being on our own and deepening our community life. We find that our two community weeks and the study week are an essential ingredient in a busy house like Alnmouth. We have also had two special local chapters when we have spent the whole meeting on the Brandt Report and the Covenanting for Unity proposals. Together with some special study evenings which are our follow-up to 'The Gospel Now Conference' last year, we are finding much to ponder and mull over.

Sister Jean writes:

DOVER Homelessness is a degrading, dehumanising situation to be in; people feel less than a person when all that makes for home is taken away. Without a home there is no sense of belonging, if you don't belong you feel rejected, an outcast, one of 'them' not one of 'us'.

Those who come to S. Alphege Centre, come, because for the time being they are homeless. They are angry and resentful concerning the circumstances which have made them homeless. They feel let down and bewildered by it all, like children they continually say 'It's not fair'. Whether these feelings are justified or not, this is how they feel and we often have objectionable behaviour problems, flouting the rules and generally not co-operating, because this is the way to 'get back' at society and hurt people in authority.

Underneath a rough, hard exterior, there is a hurt, wounded person. Through love and patience we try to build up relationships of trust and often are rewarded in getting a glimpse beyond the rough, hard exterior and seeing the extent of the wounds and the depth of the hurt, and receive confidences.

We have a mixed group ranging from three months to seventy years of age. When a young attractive man came to paint the house, I felt we would have problems with the young women; instead I found the older women running round him, making cups of tea or coffee, giving him cakes and biscuits. They even found jobs for him to do which were not strictly speaking his work. This made them feel important, fulfilling their need to be needed, giving them significance. For each resident, their room is their home, this is where they belong and they want to share what they have with others.

Brother Robert writes:

PILTON During the past few months there have been some changes at the Friary. In early December James Anthony moved on to Dar es Salaam after spending Christmas with his family and friends. A fortnight before Christmas, I arrived after my time at Glasshampton. Then in early January we said farewell to Crispin, and welcomed Simeon who has taken up the duties at S. David's Church.

Our activities in and outside the friary are many and varied; hence making them a real focus during our worship together in our small and simple chapel in the friary.

Juniper continues his work with the Peace and Social Justice Movement. Groups meet at the friary for discussion, prayer and action. Also, twice a week, he does some nursing at S. Columba's Hospice, where he is also the chaplain; and regularly goes into the local primary school. Amid these activities and other engagements he continues with his studies for Training in Ministry.

Ian continues to do much work in welcoming people who come to the friary for a chat over a cup of tea. In the evenings, the friary is well used by youngsters in the area; and the labours of his work and patience are beginning to yield much fruit. He also does the Chaplaincy at the Northern General Hospital twice a week.

Simeon has initiated several activities and Lenten discussion groups. A teenagers' group meets here once a fortnight for discussions, bible study, and later on some outings are planned. We are privileged in having a daily Eucharist, and some extra services during Lent.

Robert has been helping some Vietnamese people, who have been re-settled in the area, with their English Language studies. Also he does some visiting; and recently went to speak to our local Companions and Tertiary group, and the local Baptist Bible Study Group. Much time is also spent in the house welcoming those who call.

Recently we showed the film *Brother Sun and Sister Moon*, on the life of S. Francis and S. Clare to a packed hall at S. David's. The response was tremendous. It was good to see some of our Companions and Tertiaries too.

Later in the year we plan to have some celebrations for the 'Year of Saint Francis'.

We would value very much any of our brothers to come and share a few days with us, perhaps for a weekend, or holiday or if you are just passing through! The Scotch pies are delicious and Ian's steam-puddings are a must!

Hence the diversity of our work, and just being here brings us into contact with a wide range of people. In an area where unemployment is high; housing conditions are poor, and violence an everyday occurrence. We pray that the S.S.F. may be an instrument in God's hand as a sign of hope, reflecting the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ here in Pilton.

Sister Eileen Mary writes:

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME Phyllis has been with us since just before Christmas and is making great improvements in the garden, besides building up links with local people. Nan has left us after a happy and successful contribution to the house, with a holiday and her profession in first vows ahead of her. Lesley has begun to settle into the life of the house and make friends, as has Jeannette. It is good to have two who play guitars and they encourage each other. Mildred is adding to her visiting list and, dare I say it, brings a grandmotherly warmth to the house. Phyllis and I both have missions to lead and find this stimulating but demanding. Certainly a contrast to the practicalities of running the house and garden.

The Third Order in North Staffs. is now independent. It continues to use the house for meetings and is obviously flourishing: they are a great joy and support

to us. Plans for the Lichfield Celebrations on Saturday, 5 June are well in place now; please remember to come in good time as parking is in the town and not easy. The mass is at 12 noon. Bring a picnic and be prepared for a good afternoon ending with a beautifully sung evensong in the cathedral.

Any groups who could bring and set up a stall—of any kind, or offer a contribution towards the day, please do. There is plenty of space around The Close. There will not be a house festival this year, but we hope to meet all our friends at Lichfield, particularly to renew acquaintance with our many Companions in the area.

Brother Robert Hugh writes:

AMERICAN PROVINCE I remember an evening seven years ago when I stood in Death Valley, California, while a sunset of extraordinary beauty and variety unfolded around me. I longed to freeze those moments, yet I knew that much of the beauty lay in the constant shifting of colours which soon would be gone. I felt a thrill, but I also felt a pain at being alone and having no one with whom to share it all.

The friars of the American Province held their first General Chapter in over ten years at the end of January. Our theme was 'A spirituality for resurrection, rather than for mere survival'. It was a 'Death Valley' experience of great beauty which those who shared it will not forget, yet it is well-nigh impossible to share in words with you. We shared much joy and awareness of God's initiative in our lives; and we also shared a lot of our pain, and in doing so allowed it to die and be healed; for we learned that a spirituality for resurrection must embrace death on the way to new life, rather than struggle for survival by trying to keep death at bay.

We established three immediate priorities for the next eighteen months:

- (1) To build on the open and honest communication we experienced with each other, providing prime time in our households for sharing our spiritual journeys as feeling persons, and for supporting each other in our vowed life together.
- (2) To establish from September a specific twelve-month program of noviciate formation in close co-operation with our First Order sisters, using our San Francisco house for this purpose.
- (3) To encourage brothers to share their hopes and dreams of future outreach and ministry, seeking opportunities for appropriate training and skills enrichment; and as a first step to explore the opening of a new house with four brothers in Minneapolis by September 1982, with

the intention of working closely with the Diocese of Minnesota and with S. Mary's Rehabilitation Center.

Since I last wrote Brother Donald Sullivan has been elected to life profession, and Brother Jon Bankert was clothed as a novice. Please keep them in your prayers.

Throughout the General Chapter we were all gratefully conscious of being sustained on waves of prayer from many parts of the world. As we try to harness that momentum for the future we ask you please to keep those prayers coming!

Sister Cecilia writes:

THE COMMUNITY OF S. FRANCIS Sandra Kay is our new novice; she is a nurse but we hope not to provide her with too much work in that capacity! She is spending two days a week visiting patients in a very large city hospital with a great proportion of elderly and terminally ill residents, many of them without friends or relatives. Suzanne is doing part-time voluntary work with the World Without War Council in Berkeley and with a program for alcoholism at one of the city churches here.

We ask your prayers for the Spring mission-tour being undertaken by Ruth, Pamela, Suzanne, Sandra, Derek, Lee and Robert Robinson in the parishes in Oregon, Washington and Idaho—a tour for sharing the gospel and Franciscanism and its message today. We are all very excited about this and hope that it will be but the first of such ventures.

Catherine Joy continues as port chaplain in the Episcopal Seamen's Service and was able recently to attend a helpful chaplains' conference in New York. I joined in the Religious Life Triennial Conference held this year in Cincinnati.

Brother Philip writes:

PACIFIC ISLANDS PROVINCE With the difficulties of travel and communication we have in the Province together with the elections, then finding a suitable time for the chapter, we were late in sending in news for the last FRANCISCAN.

Randolph is now Guardian in P.N.G. and Geoffrey Leonard Guardian in Solomons.

In P.N.G. we are hoping to build a house of bush materials suitable for two or three brothers near to Popondetta. This will enable us to be more involved in the ministry of the church in Popondetta and be a place for more practical training for the novices.

In the Solomons, we are to build up the involvement of the brothers in S. Nicholas Centre. At S. Nicholas, Geoffrey Leonard leads a team

which is building up a christian communication centre for the church in Melanesia. This will also mean a more clearly defined role for Patteson House, we hope.

Andrew Patteson has returned from New Zealand but Philip Marsden will stay there for another year. Next year we hope it will be possible for three brothers to go to New Zealand, two from the Solomons and one from P.N.G.; later in 1983, possibly two to Australia. The visits have been of benefit to both the brothers who have gone and to the brothers of the other Province.

With the election of Randolph as Guardian, I am now more free to exercise my ministry as Minister. I will be going to the Solomons twice this year for longer periods than before and will be spending some time with Andrew.

Andrew has had to go to Brisbane as his mother has not been well.

Since 5 December, Daniel has been at Haruro where he is acting as Provincial Secretary, bursar and Novice Guardian. We have with us for a year Ian Forbes, who some of the brothers in the U.K. know. Ian is to go to Theological College in England in 1983 and wanted some experience overseas. He has come to live and work at Haruro for 1982, helping with the novice training and assisting Randolph with book-keeping, etc. He very quickly fitted in even to the extent of being taught to chew betel nut by the village people at Alfred's farewell.

The feeling of the brothers at the first chapter of the Province is indicative of the feeling of the Province. We look forward to the future with much hope and with thanksgiving for God's blessing in the past years.

Brother Daniel writes:

HARURO Christmas was the usual busy time at Haruro, with the fact that Alfred was going off to the U.K. for twelve months making things seem even more rushed.

The crib was made, and as usual put under the altar, the figures newly painted and looking very well—then I was reminded of a few years ago at Hilfield when the crib was put under a crucifix, which seemed to be growing out of the top of the crib, and Reginald preached a very good sermon on the shadow of the cross. When the crib was removed from the Haruro chapel a snake was found to be hiding in the leaf roof of the crib. He had been silently waiting and watching all through Christmas, he had been censured with the crib and had carols sung in front of him. Another good sermon could be preached.

Alfred left on Monday, 28 December and the village people arranged a feast and kasaba at the Friary on the Sunday before; a huge pig was brought to the Friary

with much ceremony, Alfred wearing Tapa, feathers and beads. That was a sight, but nothing to the next thing which was Alfred still in his decorations, killing and cutting up the pig. After a couple of weeks without meat, the brothers were looking forward to the feast, but soon were fed up with the sight of pig and grease. The feast took place after evensong, then the drums came out, and those of us who did not know what a Kasaba was found out. Drums were beaten, songs sung, the women danced, much tea was drunk, non stop until 6 o'clock Monday morning. Then Alfred started to get ready to leave at 6.30—and the wailing and crying started. A great send-off for his year of study.

It is hoped that in 1982 the brothers will be doing more work in Popondetta, a number of possibilities are opening up, and it will be good for the novices to be more involved in pastoral work. After many years of hard slog keeping Haruro going on the part of Philip, Alfred, Randolph and Timothy, it looks as though we are stepping out and ask for your prayers for the future.

Brother Brian writes:

AUSTRALIA AND

NEW ZEALAND PROVINCE

There have been some changes among the brothers at the Auckland friary. After many years Reginald has moved to Brookfield where he has taken up his work as tutor to the novices and junior professed. He will be missed very much in New Zealand where a number of people turned to him for spiritual direction and where for over ten years he had been a faithful pastor to the growing Third Order. His skill and experience as a retreat conductor as well as his knowledge of liturgy and music were also much valued in that country.

Bruce-Paul, a younger Australian priest brother, who made his life profession last September, has moved from Morris House, Taringa, to Auckland where he is involved in a heavy pastoral and preaching ministry. Caleb has succeeded Reginald as Third Order chaplain in New Zealand. He is also associating himself with the Maori Pastorate in Auckland and attempting to learn the language. George, who in Canadian style makes visitors to the friary so welcome, is having three months at the Bishop's Ranch, Healdsburg, California before visiting his relatives in Canada. The guardian, Leo Anthony, is also Canadian and in addition to organising the friary is involved in a variety of ministry. He has initiated some experiments in ministry and led small teams of brothers on pastoral visits to parishes and on camps for young people. During 1981 the Auckland friary was augmented by two brothers from the Pacific Islands' Province, Andrew Patteson and

Philip Marsden. They had come for further training and experience of another country but have given as much as they have received. The former returned to the Solomons at the completion of his year where he is needed at Alangaula. The latter, who comes from Vanuatu, is remaining at Auckland for a second year. Altogether Auckland is a friary which appears cosmopolitan. The only New Zealander at present is a novice, Damian Kenneth. We pray that others in that country who are being called will make a positive response.

Australia is a little better off for novices. There are three plus two postulants, two of whom are priests. The two Pacific Islanders at Brookfield are Samson Amoni from the Solomons and Samuel Kingston from Papua New Guinea. The latter will make his profession in Easter week. The addition of William Lash (for eighteen months) and Reginald gives the Brookfield custody greater maturity and strength. Under Wayne's guardianship and with William's wisdom and experience there is a good foundation on which to build. Most brothers are involved in pastoral and evangelistic work outside the friary. Reginald will be conducting retreats for clergy of the Newcastle Diocese in May and undertaking a programme of preaching in Western Australia throughout October. Others, such as Alan Barnabas, William Lash, Paul James and Howard, are also leading parish missions and retreats this year. William continues his excellent work in the pottery assisted by two apprentices, and Maseo is now in charge of Morris House. Some small group activities have been held at Brookfield including two ordination retreats. All this is quietly undergirded by the life and prayer of the Second Order sisters in the monastery at Stroud and the brothers in the hermitage. In due course, and in God's time, faithfulness will receive its award.

The year began for the Third Order in Australia when many tertiaries came to the conference centre at Morpeth for the first-ever general chapter. Some came from as far north as Mt. Isa and Rockhampton plus members of their families who were not all tertiaries. Paul Cook, a priest of the Diocese of Bunbury, spent over four days and four nights on a motor coach to get there. Laraine Hinds (guardian), James Warner, Joy Caporn, Elsie Clack and Brother Alan Barnabas (chaplain) had done a splendid job of organisation to bring together so many who are separated by such vast distances. It was a good long weekend of common worship, discussion and recreation; and also marked the

beginning of the Minister General's visit to Australia who together with Brother Benedict had flown into Sydney the day before.

I write this a few days after returning to Stroud from Melbourne where there had been the annual meeting of Superiors and of the Religious Life advisory council. These and preachments at Geelong and visits with some tertiaries have made the eighteen hours' rail journeys worthwhile.

Letter to Companions

Alnmouth Friary

February, 1982

Dear Companions,

In the last issue of *THE FRANCISCAN* I wrote that a list of local secretaries would hopefully appear this time. As a sizeable number have offered their resignation in recent months and have not been replaced this is not practicable at present.

How can Companions best celebrate this 800th anniversary of Saint Francis' birth? Well; there are celebrations at various centres, but it would seem that part of it could be to do with our more personal Christian Life. For Companions the centre of it all may be the words at the end of the membership card 'Companions are recommended to draw up a personal Rule of Life'. As a brother of the First Order I'm not in a position to know what is the best form of Rule of Life for Companions; but many of you will have been living out such a rule for years: living it, failing, repenting and starting again. Your comments and ideas (and warnings!) would be most valuable to those who are just starting (or starting again) in this way commitment in their Christian Life. If you have any thoughts or comments that would contribute to the next Companions' Letter entitled 'Rule of Life' perhaps you could let me have them in writing by the end of June.

In this way you will hopefully encourage each other in your companionship.

With all good wishes,

KEITH.

We ought never to desire to be above others, but should be servants, submissive to every human creature for the sake of God. On all who so act and persevere to the end, the Spirit of the Lord will rest, and he will make his dwelling in them.

Saint Francis' Letter to the Faithful.

Brother Francis

The Story of a Theatrical Production

BY WILLIAM FRY



IF the Communion of Saints should ever decide to put on a play or a film (especially if it were a musical) surely S. Francis of Assisi would be their natural choice for the star. He combines all the qualities needed for instant appeal to the public: a beautiful singer, a personality to draw an audience at any street corner, and also something of a clown; cheeky, ebullient, yet desperately vulnerable; brave but gentle, an obedient scamp, workman and poet, a sanctified tramp, scared of women yet drawn into lifelong partnership with a beautiful girl.

Wherever he went, Francis proved that he could draw the crowds, but he was not only the darling of the gallery; the aristocrats and intellectuals who flocked to follow him showed that he could fill the stalls and the royal circle as well.

Moreover, his life story offers amazing opportunities for spectacle: the revels at Assisi, the sensation at the bishop's court, Pope Innocent among his cardinals, the midnight elopement of S. Clare, the Crusade and the court of Sultan Melek el Kamel. The truth is that the play has already been superbly presented for us with all the resources that God and His Saints could provide.

Trying to present it again today is a different matter. It is common knowledge in the theatre that the two most difficult qualities to portray convincingly on the stage are goodness and genius; Francis had an almost unique fund of both. He would be a tempting subject for a Hollywood epic in the traditional style, but it would be only too easy to lose the man in the spectacle.

Besides, it would have been very distasteful to Francis himself. The one thing he detested was money. It is ironic enough, in view of his own wishes, that two mighty churches should have been built over his grave and the Porziuncula, without making him the subject of a multi-million production. If we are to dramatize his life at all, surely it has to be done frugally.

Money apart, there is also the question of whether it is worth doing a play about Francis at all, granted that any play is likely to be un-

worthy of its subject. There have already been plenty of dramatic representations of him: Houseman's *Little Plays of S. Francis*; *Frank Ass* and *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* all spring to mind, out of many other works about the saint. Besides, considering he is so well-known, is there anything more to be said?

In our tiny company of Theatre Roundabout, we answered that last question from our own ignorance. For over fifteen years we had been working in religious drama, travelling round churches and studying Christianity, yet about S. Francis we were appallingly vague. For us he was a lovable figure with a fondness for animals, a friendship with S. Dominic, the stigmata and a complete lack of business sense. If that was all we knew about him, surely the people in the pews were unlikely to know much more.

When we decided in 1975 to write a new play about him for touring in the following spring, we did not even realise that we were approaching the 750th anniversary of his death. A friend had given us a copy of *The Life of S. Francis* by Paul Sabatier, but we were in urgent need of more primary sources of information.

To our rescue came the Right Reverend John Moorman, D.D., who was then Bishop of Ripon. He told us what books to read and which to take with a pinch of salt, he explained about the suppression of the legends, he read our script in its first draft and suggested corrections, and he allowed us to link his name with the final version of *Brother Francis, The Legend of Assisi*.

We wanted the play to be as meticulously accurate as is possible after seven hundred and fifty years. Bishop Moorman told us to read *The Two Lives of Thomas of Celano*, *The Legend of the Three Companions*, *The Mirror of Perfection* and *The Little Flowers of S. Francis*. He also gave us a list of books which we might read provided we did not take them too seriously.

In its final version almost every line of the play was taken directly from one of those five books. We were amazed to find them so detailed and vivid; the best way to achieve a dramatic effect was to follow their story exactly. The greatest difficulty, with only two hours to fill, was deciding what to leave out.

The first necessity was to identify the vital pivots on which the life of Francis turned. There were so many of them. The points we chose

were his joining the war against Perugia, his imprisonment and illness, his turning back from the crusade under Gentile, his sudden moment of stillness at the revel, his kissing the leper, the voice of the Crucifix in San Damiano, his stealing of his father's cloth, his stripping in the bishop's court, the reading of the Gospel at the Porziuncula, the arrival of Bernard, Giles and Sylvester (we could have gone on all night if we had introduced all the friars) and his visit to Pope Innocent III in Rome.

That brought us to the interval. The second half launched almost at once into the story of S. Clare, which took about twenty minutes, then a few comedy scenes, leading to the Chapter of the Mats, the Siege of Damietta and the Sultan of Egypt. The true crisis of the play was the stone house at Bologna and the intervention of Cardinal Ugolino, leading to the resignation of Francis from the leadership of the Order. The closing scenes were in a minor key: the miracle of the Stigmata, his illness and death.

Having sorted out the plot, the next point to decide was the question of style. The original writers of the Legends handled their subject with awed reverence, and most modern translators have followed their lead by using the language of the Authorised Version. This gives a sense of dignity but seemed to us to detract from the vitality of Francis and his unique quality as a saintly *enfant terrible*. We therefore settled for the simplest possible everyday speech, sometimes even descending to schoolboy slang.

For instance, what is generally known as The Parable of the Net appeared in our script as: 'I think a lot of fishes are going to swim into my net, but I shall only keep the big ones. I'll throw the tiddlers back into the water'. Blinded by this simplicity, many people failed to realise that this was a direct transliteration from the Legends, like all the rest of the play. The only dramatic licence we allowed ourselves was in the compression of time. The only piece of fiction was to bring Count Gentile back for the Siege of Damietta as a mouthpiece for the corruption of the Crusaders.

Some friars had told us that Franciscans were feeling uneasy about dramatisations of S. Francis. A group of friars had been persuaded to greet the press at a cinema where a film on the subject was being shown. Afterwards they had gone in to see the film and felt deeply embarrassed as they could not approve of it.

We were determined that this should not happen with us, so as soon as Bishop Moorman had finally approved our script, we sent it to the Society of S. Francis and to the Order of Friars Minor. In both cases it was returned with the warmest possible approval of both its content and its style. Later, when some less committed people attacked the play as trivial and irreverent, we were comforted to remember what the Franciscans thought of it.

Producing the script was not the only problem. An even greater one was how to stage it. Theatre Roundabout is one of the smallest of what the Arts Council calls 'small-scale touring companies'. Many of our productions are for only two performers, and the most our van will carry is six people. Equity insists that one of these should be a non-acting stage manager, which left us with only five performers for the whole show, but it was impossible to tell the story accurately with fewer than twenty-six characters.

Clearly, one actor had to play Francis throughout. One actress could play his mother, Saint Clare and an old beggar woman. That left three actors to play the rest. Two played seven parts each, and the other played eight. It was going to need a versatile and talented cast.

If the audience were not to be confused, this profuse doubling would mean continual changes of costume and makeup, which would often have to be done in a great hurry. Churches are difficult places for quick changes. We frequently found ourselves playing on an isolated platform in the middle of the nave of some vast cathedral, with nowhere for an actor to hide while he tore off his friar's habit and climbed into a knight's doublet or a cardinal's robe.

The problem was solved by putting up two screens, shaped to look like mediaeval tents, of the kind found in markets, on battlefields and so forth, but which were actually built on hanging rails, so that all the costumes and props could be hidden behind them in advance. In each 'tent' were three chairs where the actors could sit while waiting for their cue, and nobody left the stage at all during the play, except for the interval.

There were other practical problems. Most churches have very sketchy electrical wiring, too weak to bear conventional theatre lighting. We had a special dimmer system designed for us that could be worked off four 13-amp sockets, which might be scattered fifty feet apart in

various corners of the building. Everything had to be small, light and if possible cheap; we grudged weight, space and money.

Francis was a singer, and it would have been unthinkable to try to present his life without music. Sydney Carter wrote four songs specially for the production, one being directly based on the Cantic of the Creatures and another on the song with which he begged for stone. There was of course no question of carrying any musicians with us, so they were written to be sung to a simple accompaniment of stamping or clapping, or (in one case) knocking two stones together. It was another Franciscan economy.

However careful we were, it was a hideously expensive undertaking for such a tiny company. The Arts Council of Great Britain made us a generous guarantee against loss, and the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel most kindly printed our posters, handbills and programmes for us. The costume bill was inevitably heavy, and Equity very rightly insists on substantial salaries for touring actors, though we were able to save something by accepting private hospitality wherever we went.

The tour had been sold on the reputation of the company and the popularity of S. Francis. Booking was remarkably brisk, and we soon found ourselves engaged to play eighty performances in seventy-six different places between 1 March and 5 June, 1976, a total of only ninety-seven days. This was a formidable programme, especially considering that we should have to drive an average of over sixty miles per show.

The first week of the tour was the most unnerving, with performances at Westminster and Worcester Cathedrals, at S. George's Chapel, Windsor, and (in a heavily cut—not to say filleted—version) on television. After that first week, our nerves grew steadier, and for some time the greatest danger was mere exhaustion.

Ours was an exacting schedule and not a comfortable one. An average day began after breakfast, when two of us would settle down at typewriters to clear the correspondence we had found waiting for us the night before. Later the whole company would gather and set off in the van for a drive of anything up to one hundred miles to the next place of performance. We often had to spend three hours a day on the road.

On arrival, we would brew a cup of tea before going in to start work. The set-up took about two hours of hard physical work, carrying

costumes, tents and lighting equipment, climbing ladders, laying cables and sometimes arguing with vergers. One man was deemed to be stage manager and actually ran the show, but we all worked together to put it up and take it down. Even the costumes were a heavy load.

After the set-up we had half-an-hour for sandwiches before making up and getting dressed for the show. Once the performance began, nobody had a moment to relax, and conditions could be cruel. In one cathedral, we were playing in bare feet with the temperature below freezing. At other times, it could be very hot, especially for someone wearing three costumes on top of one another.

Immediately after the show, we would take off our make-up, get back into our ordinary clothes and then strip down the stage and electrics, pack up the costumes, and load everything back into our van. This was of course much quicker than the set-up and usually took less than half-an-hour. By this time it would be about ten o'clock, and our host would take us back for supper and bed. There would be a new batch of letters waiting for us, and everything to do again tomorrow.

At first critical reaction to the play was very kind. We had a nice notice in the *Sunday Telegraph*, and many local papers enthused about us. Then, in Holy Week, we had a sudden shock, when the two Liverpool newspapers could say nothing good of us. The company took it very hard. Their confidence was badly shaken, and it was weeks before it returned. Then it happened again at Norwich, where the show was dismissed by a young critic as 'the shallowest play I have ever seen'.

It was curious to see how varied the response was. Here was a script which had been approved by Franciscans and scholars, being attacked as naive and stupid. *Brother Francis* seemed to make its greatest appeal to the learned and simple. It was those in between who made a fuss. One lady in Birmingham said afterwards: 'What I liked about that play was—it was nothing like Shakespeare; you could understand every word'. The same feeling may have informed the amateur actor in Newcastle who said: 'Rather fourth-form really; now, last week we had a really mature play—nobody quite knew what it was all about'.

Fourth-form or not, the play had been sufficiently popular for us to run a second tour in the spring of 1977 for forty-three performances in the provinces, followed by a run of three weeks at the Westminster Theatre as part of the London Council of Churches' contribution to

Cantico di Frate Sole

Altissimu, onnipotente, bon Signore,
tu so' le laude, la gloria e l'honore et onne benedictione.

Ad te solo, Altissimo, se konfano,
et nullu homo ène dighu te mentovare.

Laudato sie, mi' Signore, cum tucte le tue creature, 5
spetialmente messor lo frate sole,
lo qual'è iorno, et allumini noi per lui.
Et ellu è bellu e radiante cum grande splendore:
de te, Altissimo, porta significatione.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per sora luna e le stelle: 10
in celu l'ài formate clarite et pretiose et belle.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per frate vento
et per aere et nubilo et sereno et onne tempo,
per lo quale a le tue creature dàì sustentamento.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per sor'aqua, 15
La quale è multo utile et humile et pretiosa et casta.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per frate focu,
per lo quale ennallumini la nocte:
ed ello è bello et iocundo et robustoso et forte.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per sora nostra matre terra, 20
la quale ne sustenta et governa,
et produce diversi fructi con coloriti flori et herba.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per quelli ke perdonano per lo tuo amore
et sostengo infirmitate et tribulatione.

Beati quelli ke 'l sosterrano in pace, 25
ka da te, Altissimo, sirano incoronati.

Laudato si', mi' Signore, per sora nostra morte corporale,
da la quale nullu homo vivente pò skappare:
guai a'cquelli ke morrano ne le peccata mortali;
beati quelli ke trovarà ne le tue sanctissime voluntati, 30
ka la morte secunda no 'l farrà male.

Laudate e benedicete mi' Signore et rengratiare
e serviateli cum grande humilitate.

Canticle of Brother Sun

Most high, most powerful, good Lord,
Praise, glory and honour, and all blessings are yours.

To you alone, most high, do they belong,
And no man is worthy to speak your name.

Praise be to you, my Lord, and to all your creation, 5
Especially Sir Brother sun,
Who is our day, and you give us light through him.
And he is beautiful, and shines with great splendour.
From you, most high, he takes his meaning.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from Sister moon and the stars: 10
In the heavens you have formed them, shining and precious and beautiful.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from Brother wind,
and from air and cloud and calm and all weathers,
through which you give your creatures nourishment.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from Sister water, 15
Who is so useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from Brother fire,
through whom you lighten our night:
and he is handsome and merry and vigorous and strong.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from our Sister mother earth, 20
who nourishes and sustains us,
and brings forth her various fruits, with many-coloured flowers and grasses.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from those who forgive for love of you,
bearing weakness and tribulation.

Blessed are those who bear them in peace, 25
for by you, most high, will they be crowned.

Praise be to you, my Lord, from our Sister bodily death,
from which no man living can escape:
woe to those who die in mortal sin;
blessed are those whom she shall find doing your most holy will, 30
for the second death shall not harm them.

Praise and bless and give thanks to my Lord,
and serve Him with great humility.

B.M.
Greystones S. Francis
16.xii.1981

the celebrations of the Silver Jubilee. Staying in one place for three weeks on end seemed almost like a rest-cure. In fact, one member of the cast actually fell asleep on stage, sitting in one of the changing 'tents', and had to be woken to hurry on late for a cue.

As in the provinces, so in town, opinion differed fiercely. Some papers loved it, some hated it. Even the Catholic press was divided. On the whole the objections were to the simplicity of the language and the directness of the story. A radio commentator attacked it on the grounds that Francis seemed not to be troubled by doubt. We felt some of these criticisms were aimed less at us than at Francis himself.

The only thing that really mattered about the play was the effect that it had on people, not least on members of the cast. The man who played Francis on our first tour had not been a Christian; he had in fact flirted with a group of left-wing extremists who told him it was his duty to sabotage the Christian play. This he refused to do, partly out of a natural niceness, partly because he revered Francis as a pioneer Communist, one of the prophets of the left wing. As the tour went on, this actor fell more and more under the spell of Francis, and by the end he had become, if not a churchgoer, at least a believer.

Nobody was unaffected. It is impossible to look at the life of S. Francis without being disturbed. One American businessman was shocked: surely Francis was wrong in disliking money. He went away sorrowful, like the young man in the Gospel. One vowed Franciscan was quite undone by the performance. It was that stone house in Bologna that accused him; he had known the story for years, but never before had he seen Francis cry.

One young man became a Franciscan as a result of seeing the show. Another, more surprisingly, got married. A lady in Hexham told us it had restored her joy in Christianity.

Strangest of all, a vicar brought a coachload of petty criminals and layabouts from a housing estate in his parish. Many had never been to the theatre before, but they became deeply involved, and one scene particularly gripped them. It was actually played for comedy: the scene where the penniless Giles is persuaded to give his cloak to a beggar woman. Afterwards he says: 'You know, I really enjoyed that . . . It was as if that cloak flew straight up to Heaven'.

All the way back in the coach, they talked about this scene. It was their first inkling that a poor person might give, and from that moment

the Vicar dated a change in his community. People began to give to one another, and he even witnessed one woman give another a pound of tea, saying: 'There you are, dear; it's gone straight up to Heaven'.

Brother Francis, The Legend of Assisi by Peter Albery and William Fry has now been released for performance by amateurs. The script has been published in the series *Plays for the Eighties* and can be obtained from RADIUS, S. Paul's Church, Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ED (Tel. 01-836 8669) for £1.50 per copy. It can be performed by any number of players from five to twenty-six, and more can easily be introduced as extras.

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The Poetry of Praise

BY BRIAN MOLONEY



FRANCIS required his companions to go about the world preaching. And just as medieval minstrels or street-singers sang the deeds of Charlemagne and his paladins, so too, the Friars Minor—God's ballad-mongers—were at the end of their sermons to sing His praises, asking as their recompense that their audience should repent. But what were the Friars to sing, in a country which had little in the way of vernacular poetry?

The *Canticle of Brother Sun*, as Francis liked to call his poem, was written to provide the Friars with a suitable hymn. It was therefore intended for group worship; but since it also sprang from the saint's profound awareness of a creation united in praise of its Maker, its inspiration was also intensely personal. We do not know as much as we should like about the circumstances in which the poem came to be written: there is little solid evidence to support the version according to which lines 1—22 represent the original nucleus, written in 1225, while Francis lay ill, with lines 23—26 added in the course of his mediation in an undocumented but very probable dispute between the local civic authority and the Bishop, and with lines 27—33 added by

the Saint on his death-bed. The disadvantage of such stories is that they suggest a lack of unity in the poem, whereas the *Mirror of Perfection* (chapters CXVIII—CXX) presents the poem as a unitary composition. The same source also makes it clear that the poem was intended to be sung, and that Francis had composed a melody for it. The size of the blank space above the first lines in Codex 338 in the Municipal Library at Assisi suggests that the music which was to have been added to that copy, which dates from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, was a Gregorian chant. This would have been entirely appropriate, given the canticle or psalm-like form of the poem and its essentially biblical and liturgical language. If we look for precedents for the poem, in fact, we find them mainly in Psalm 148, in *Ecclesiasticus* 43, and in the *Song of the three young men* (*Daniel* 3, 52—88 in the Septuagint), although such was Francis' familiarity with the Bible that there is an echo of scripture in almost every line of the *Canticle*. The occasional use of rhyme and assonance (three and seven respectively) is characteristic of medieval Latin poetry, but is not as important to the structure of the poem as the repetition of key phrases (known in rhetoric as *anaphora*) and the repetition of the conjunction *and* (in rhetoric, polysyndeton).

An inevitable consequence of Francis' familiarity with the Bible and the liturgy is that the language of the *Canticle* is very Latinate. But it is not an ostentatiously learned style, nor the style of a scholar, but rather that of a man to whose lips the Latin of the Bible and the liturgy springs readily. This gives rise, in turn, to a question which might at first seem odd. Why did Francis not write in French? We know that he loved French literature—much of the imagery of his devotion, to the Lady Poverty, for example, or his comparing the Friars to minstrels, derives from French romance sources, while the *mentovare* of line 4 is the French *mentevair* or *montoivre*—and we also know that in his private outpourings of praise he turned spontaneously to French. The answer must be that, however personal his inspiration, Francis intended his poem to be used in communal worship by a relatively unlettered audience. Not, however, that he wrote in the language his audience spoke, for that was an Umbrian dialect, and a medieval poet with ambitions to expressiveness would no more have used an unrefined dialect for so lofty a subject as the praise of God, particularly when writing in canticle form, than Coverdale would have put the Psalms into broad Cockney. So the canticle is not in dialect, and the moderate

dialectal colouring in the text which has come down to us is such as could have been added unthinkingly by an Umbrian copyist (*bellu* for *bello*, *messor* for *messer*).

The form and purpose of the poem, then, are clear: it is a canticle of praise, to be sung by the Friars and their congregations. But its meaning has generated much controversy. Is God being praised *for* his creatures, *through* them—in the sense that praise of the creation is praise also of the Creator—or *by* them? Edward Armstrong in his *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic*, 1973, comments: 'Unfortunately there is an ambiguity in the wording of the Canticle so that it is not entirely clear . . .' It seems churlish to complain when confronted with a range of possible meanings, for here lies the richness of the poem. In fact, the interpretations are not mutually exclusive: it is rather a question of where the emphasis lies.

The poem begins by praising God, but also by stating that no man is worthy to mention Him. There is an echo here of the First Rule of 1221 (cap. XXIII, *Omnibus*, p. 51), and it will be well to bear this Rule in mind when reading the *Canticle*, offering as it does valuable insights into the workings of Francis' mind. Praise is due to God, the poem goes on, and also to all his creatures, especially the sun, who is given the honorific title of *Messor*, used in the Middle Ages for God and Christ, as well as of citizens worthy of regard. (This latter usage survives in the English Messrs.) To praise the creation is, indirectly, to praise the Creator, and the sun has special significance, for he is the light of day, and so is a symbol of God. His beauty and splendour are not praised for their own sake, but because they have a special significance.

To move next from praise *of* the sun to praise *by* the rest of creation might at first seem a sudden shift, but this is not really the case, as we see if we consult other Franciscan sources. The implicit sequence of ideas is, firstly, that God is praised together with his creation. Man is not worthy even to mention God, but there is no lack of scriptural precedents for the notion that creation praises Him (Psalm 103, v. 22, Rev. v. 13, for example). In key passages of *The Little Flowers* and the early *Lives* one can find evidence of Francis' conviction that most creatures, unlike sinful man, praise God simply by being and doing so beautifully what their Maker intended them to be and do—the lark, for example, not only by flying and singing, but also by its humble feeding habits (*Mirror of Perfection*, CXIII). The fifth *Admonition*

(*Omnibus*, p. 80) expresses very clearly the notion that every creature under heaven acknowledges and obeys its Creator better than wayward man. And so, as well as being praised, they by their qualities and in fulfilling their purposes praise their Maker. This interpretation depends upon taking *per* in lines 10, 12, 13, 15, 17 and 20 to mean primarily *by*, rather than *for*, which some Italianists find forced. But what more natural than that Francis, using his Italian in Latinized fashion, should bear in mind the words of the Creed and think of God as the Creator 'by whom all things are made' (*per quem omnia facta sunt*)? The absence of a direct imperative—Francis does not *tell* creation to praise its Maker—need not surprise us: if man is not worthy himself to praise the Lord, he is not worthy either to issue instructions on the subject to the rest of creation.

But if the main stress lies on the theme of a creation united in praising God, this need not totally exclude the idea of praise to God *for* his creatures. On the contrary, God is praised in line 5 *together with*, or *in the same way as* his creatures. They are therefore praised, as well as praising, but I fail to see how any translation can do justice to a poem capable of carrying these two themes through in this way. *From* might be capable of suggesting that the creatures are at one and the same time the source of praise, as well as its inspiration, and the channel through which it is directed, but I am reminded of my favourite definition of poetry as that which gets lost in translation.

Were lines 23—33 added later? This is of little real importance, provided that the inspiration and unity of the poem are maintained, as I believe they are. The poem was written after a night of intense pain. Francis was suffering from some sort of eye condition. He could not tolerate the light, had had to spend several weeks in darkness, and the only treatment which contemporary medicine could offer him was cauterization. It is very likely that these circumstances led to a period of darkness of the spirit, from which he emerged with the serene and joyful assurance which inspired the *Canticle*. We have already seen that there is about the poem an acute sense of man's sinfulness. It follows, then, that Francis can include in the company of those fit to praise God only those who, like God's other creatures, are carrying out His will. Psalm 103, vv. 20—22 offers a useful insight here: 'Praise the Lord, all you his hosts: his servants who do his will'. And His will, for men, is that they should repent of their sins, forgive their enemies, follow where He calls, and die in a state of grace. The references in

the poem to pardoning, bearing sufferings (patiently, since they are willed by God), and dying, are thus consistent both with the mood inspiring lines 1 to 22, and with Francis' most intimate spiritual experience during that night of extreme pain. The only difference between the two parts of the poem is that whereas in the first part the praise of an uncorrupt nature (apart from lines 5—6) was implicit, in the second part the praise of 'just men made perfect' is explicit, and 'blessed are those . . .' is repeated in lines 25 and 30. The final lines then aptly round off the poem by calling upon all creatures, those named in the poem as well as those not named, to praise and magnify their Lord—and to do so with great humility, bearing in mind that it was on the note of man's unworthiness that the poem opened.

Francis' poem was perhaps too personal in form and inspiration to provide a model for other Franciscan poets to imitate. In any case there was growing up in the thirteenth century a lay confraternity movement which had the specific purpose of publicly singing and acting out sacred songs on appropriate feasts. These groups, to which the Franciscan movement gave additional stimulus, were known as *laudesi*, and their services were the forerunners of both religious drama and oratorio in Italy. For their hymns or songs they used secular music and metres, particularly the *ballata*. The *ballata*, which is not to be confused with our ballad, was basically a round-dance (*ballare*—to dance), the stanzas of which were based on two contrasting melodies. The circle of singers changed the direction of their dance as they moved from one melody to another. The refrain was usually sung standing still. The *ballata* was originally used for secular love-poetry, much of the language of which is now turned to the expression of religious devotion, especially to the Virgin Mary.

Venite a lăudare,
per amore cantare
de l'amorosa Vergene Maria.

Maria gloriosa blata
per sempre sia molto laudata:
pregghiam che ne si' avvocata
al tuo figliuolo, Virgo pia.

(Anon.)

Come and praise,
sing for love
of the loving Virgin Mary.

Glorious blessed Mary
 be always highly praised:
 we pray that you will be our advocate
 with your Son, merciful Virgin.

Since the *ballata* was considered to be a 'middle' form, neither sublimely lofty nor excessively lowly, its language could be simpler and more everyday than was possible in the case of more complex metrical forms. A strong dialectal element was also permissible.

The poems sung by the *laudesi* were often anonymous, as is the case of most of the poems in the substantial late thirteenth-century *Laudario cortonese*, from which the previous quotation is taken, but the most celebrated *lauda* poet whose identity is known is the Franciscan Brother Iacopone da Todi (c. 1236—1306).

Iacopone (Big James) was born Iacopo Benedetti, son of an aristocratic family from the Umbrian hill town of Todi. We know little of his early life, other than that he read law at Bologna, where he could have come into contact with early Italian lyric poetry. He was said to have been converted to the religious life by the discovery that his wife, who was killed in an accident, wore a hair-shirt under her dress. He was a member of the dissident Spirituals, who tried to remain strictly faithful to the spirit and the letter of the early Rule; he attacked the Franciscan involvement in university teaching, and was excommunicated and imprisoned by Pope Boniface VIII. The themes of repentance and revulsion from the world are, in consequence, prominent in his poetry, as when he equates the body with sin and appeals to God to send him all manner of repulsive ailments by way of mortification. The story is told that in the attempt to mortify the sense of smell, he hung some sheep's lungs in his cell until they stank and became maggot-ridden. His irate brothers threw him into the privy, where he composed the *lauda* 'O iubelo del core'. Whether the story is true or not, it encapsulates those aspects of Iacopone which make some of his poems rather difficult for a modern reader, as well as those which are so immediately attractive in their sheer delight and joy in praise.

O iubelo del core,
 che fai cantar d'amore!

Quanno iubel se scalda,
 s'è fa l'omo cantare,
 e la lengua barbaglia
 e non sa che parlare:
 dentro non p'ò celare,
 tant'è granne 'l dolzore.

(*Lauda lxxvi*)

O joy of the heart,
which makes me sing of love!

When joy is roused,
it so makes a man sing,
and stammer in his speech,
he doesn't know what to say:
he can't conceal it within,
so great is its sweetness.

Iacopone's form here is the basically simple *ballata*. His rhythms are strong, his rhymes obvious, and his syntax simple. Yet for all this, and in spite of his sustained polemic against learning, Iacopone is cultured and learned, not naive or spontaneous. His eminently realistic vocabulary includes not only the mundane objects of everyday life, but the vocabulary of the legal profession, as well as the language and concepts of the mystical theology of S. Bernard, Richard of S. Victor and S. Bonaventure. He, too, is a mystic, who has experienced a joy which is beyond comprehension and beyond expression:

O dolze amore
c'hai morto l'Amore,
prego che m'occidi d'amore.

Amor c'hai menato
lo tuo innamorato
a cusì forte morire,
pro che 'l facisiti
che non volisti
che io devesse perire?
Non me parcire,
non voler soffrire
ch'io non moga abbracciato d'Amore.
(*Lauda lxxxiii*)

O sweet love
who has killed love,
I beg you to slay me with love.

Love who has led
him who loved you
to such a cruel death,
why did you work it
that you did not want
that I should die?
Do not spare me,
do not permit
that I should not die in Love's embrace.

At times the intensity of feeling is such that conventional modes of perception and expression are no longer adequate (although the repetition in alternate lines of 'Amor, amor' and 'amor Iesù' in lines 1—5 is carried through with precision):

Amor de caritate, perché m'hai sì ferito?
Lo cor tutt'ho parito, ed arde per amore.

...

Amor, amor Iesù desideroso,
amor, voglio morire te abbracciando;
amor, amor Iesù, dolce mio sposo,
amor, amor, la morte t'addemando;
amor, amor Iesù sì delettoso,
tu me t'arrendi en te me trasformando;
pensa ch'io vo pasmando, Amor, non so o' me sia:
Iesù, speranza mia, abissame en amore.

(Lauda XC)

Love of charity, why have you so wounded me?
My heart is all shattered, and burns with love.

...

Love, Jesus love of my desire,
love, I want to die embracing you;
love, Jesus love, my sweet bridegroom,
love, love, I beg you for death;
love, Jesus love so delightful,
you give yourself to me by changing me into you;
think that I am fainting, Love, I don't know where I am:
Jesus, my hope, overwhelm me with love.

Poems such as these may be less well known than the *Stabat mater*, which is usually attributed to Iacopone, and they may lack the joy in creation which characterizes Francis: but they have undeniable power, and speak to us across the centuries with the authentic voice of personal experience.

This essay attempts to convey to the reader who has little or no Italian something of the quality and character of early Franciscan poetry, particularly that of Francis and Iacopone da Todi, in the light of recent research.

In general, the line of interpretation which I have followed is that represented by Benedetto, Branca and Getto, insufficient account of which has been taken in M. A. Habig's *S. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of S. Francis* (Chicago, 1972). For further details, see L. F. Benedetto, *Il Cantico di Frate Sole* (Florence, 1941); V. Branca, *Il Cantico di Frate Sole* (Florence, 1950); G. Getto, 'Francesco d'Assisi e il *Cantico di Frate Sole*', 'Il realismo di Iacopone da Todi', and 'Introduzione ai *Fioretti*', in his *Letteratura religiosa dal Due al Novecento* (Florence, 1967).

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‘Franciscan Art’—A Way of Seeing

BY GWENFRYD MARY C.S.F.



MY journey begins at Bobbio in Northern Italy because of an interesting idea that I came across in Diana Leatham's book *They built on a rock*. She refers to the scholarly author of a *Life of S. Columba*, Mrs. Concannon, who put forth S. Francis as a most fruitful reaper of a particular spiritual tradition. S. Columbanus, during his journeys into Europe is reputed to have gone as far south as Bobbio. There he established a particular tradition in spirituality, the arts, and culture, that was to have very far-reaching effects.

We know from the many and varied ‘Lives’ of S. Francis now available that Francis found at Bobbio many things which made a deep and lasting impression upon him. Here, at one of the most remote cradles of Celtic tradition and spirituality, he found what may have become the basis for future Franciscan spirituality—or for what we today call by that name. According to Mrs. Concannon, the young Francis found at Bobbio the pattern for his actual buildings based on the bee-hive huts of the Celtic saints—an encampment with a large wooden cross at its entrance. He found also some ideas about the clothes that were worn by these Celtic brothers, and the Celtic word ‘carcair’, (modern Welsh—‘carchar’), was none other than his beloved ‘carceri’ or cell—a cave or some other simple dwelling set in some remote place. Are such beginnings a far cry from the priceless art treasures of the Upper Basilica at Assisi or from those of Sante Croce in Florence for instance? Are these links between Muirdach’s ‘Great Cross’ at Clonmacnois, Illtud’s Crosses at Llanilltud-Fawr and the frescoes done by Cimabue and Giotto at Assisi and Florence? Was the Franciscan poet, Iacopone da Todi influenced by Celtic Nature Poetry? The similarity between them is possibly more than just coincidental. There is a twelfth century Welsh poem called ‘Y Meudwy’ (The Hermit), the story of an Irish prince, Marfan, who, satiated by the life of a prince and warrior, becomes a hermit. His brother, Gwair, tries to persuade him to return to the life of the court and the battlefield. There follows a long soliloquy on the merits of the solitary life, and a magnificent description of the wonders of Nature and of the hermit’s closeness to the Creator—in the best ‘Franciscan’

tradition! The prince's brother, Gwair, is in the end convinced by the argument, and the poem ends with his voicing the desire to leave behind him his kingdom and all his princely wealth in order to join his brother as a hermit.

All that, perhaps, is no more than a fanciful idea—to me an extremely attractive one. Now, however, I turn to what is possibly more acceptable and concrete evidence. Professor David Talbot Rice in his book on art *From Prehistory to the Thirteenth Century*, points out that art historians connect the Franciscan Order with a great influence on Italian religious art. This was by bringing a 'humanisation' to the art, and is seen most clearly in crucifix painting. The figures on the crosses would often be more than life-size and very life-like. Examples by many talented artists are to be found in churches all over Italy. There were two powerful trends in Italian art during the thirteenth century. One was classical in persuasion, and came from Apulia and the formal Classical tradition; and was followed by such painters as Giovanni Pisano and others from the Southern Italian states. I want to concentrate on the other, which came from the North, and was followed by such painters as Cimabue and Giotto, eventually known as the 'Berlinghieri School'. This trend was towards realism and humanisation and it showed a sympathy with the concrete character of things—a style that was, at times, really calligraphic and free when compared to the more stiff formality of the Classical style. It was a kind of expressionism inspired by realism.

This realism was probably common to all areas of Italy during the thirteenth century, and was claimed to be a result of Franciscan preaching and teaching. Franciscan preaching began what was almost a revolution in the world of art. Styles of painting returned to simple, almost primitive, power, and this is what we see when we look at the works of Cimabue and his pupil Giotto, in the Basilica at Assisi. We are told that Cimabue was acknowledged as the leader of this new movement.

'Realism'—with figures larger than life-size—this is what we find at Assisi. Cimabue was working in the Upper Church of the Basilica around 1288. He was also responsible for the frescoes depicting the 'Life of S. Francis' in the Baptistry at Florence—working in Florence around 1240, and at Pisa in 1302. He was back in Assisi sometime round 1295, during which time he painted the well-known 'portrait' of

S. Francis, which is part of a group of figures included in a picture called 'The Madonna of S. Francis'. This is to be seen on one of the walls of the Lower Church.

The Italian conscience was reawakened by the coming of S. Francis and his Order, and a move was made towards a more personal and intimate type of religion, with a leaning towards mysticism as opposed to the more formal, artificial religion of the time. Francis, with his spontaneity and simplicity in every-day Christianity, made a tremendous appeal to the ordinary people. He and his Order, were, at first, regarded with a certain amount of suspicion by the Church, who saw it as a threat to authority and order. However, the greatest impact on art, and particularly on the artists of 'the Assisi Workshop', was to come later through the influence of S. Bonaventura. The first reactions were more restrained and unnoticed and were based more or less on Cistercian models—an art that was sober, austere and simple, in keeping with S. Francis' edict that the Order's places of worship were to be modest and simple. With the passing of that first generation, however, came a flowering of 'Franciscan' art through the work of the Assisi Workshop where some of the more talented artists from places like Rome and Florence gathered to create some of the most loved and familiar pictures of all history.

Cimabue and his pupil, Giotto, worked there, as did Simone Martini (1283—1344); Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti (before 1348), the sculptor Donatello, and the Della Robbia family—Giovanni, Andrea and Luca, all of whom worked in ceramics, and whose works are to be seen in nearly all of the Franciscan sanctuaries in central Italy. Also, there was Berlinghieri, whose name was to be given to this new school of painting when it broke away from the Byzantine tradition around 1250 as a result of the influence of S. Francis' humanistic and naturalistic preaching. Florence, too, had its Franciscan collection—in the Basilica of Sante Croce we find a wealth of frescoes and sculptures by the same masters. The Baptistry, the Cathedral Church of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Bell-Tower also contain works which are linked to this school, and the Uffizi Gallery has a good representative selection.

In fact, one is probably quite accurate in making the assumption that today, most art galleries and museums in the Western world own one or more art works—a painting, a piece of sculpture, an illuminated

book, a tapestry, or a panel of stained glass which depicts S. Francis or some episode from his life: and we can assume that some of these works were done by one or other of the Italian masters already mentioned. The cult of Franciscan subjects and the influence of this particular type of humanistic and naturalistic spirituality spread throughout Europe; and has, in some degree, continued its appeal into our own century. This is a vast topic, and one could spend years researching and gathering material from many countries, perhaps as the basis for a comprehensive book on the subject. Unfortunately, with limited time and space, I can only mention a few samples of 20th century work, all depicting S. Francis, and all within reasonably easy access for viewing.

Taizé has a beautiful stained-glass picture of S. Francis preaching to the birds. This subject has also been used for the Gilbert White window at S. Mary's Church, Selbourne, and in a memorial window at Church Hanborough in Oxfordshire. Sir Stanley Spencer's rendering of this subject is to be seen at the Tate Gallery. There are various statues depicting S. Francis—two interesting and very contrasting ones at the Hilfield Friary—one carved by an African artist and the other by a Sister at Freeland. S. Francis Roman Catholic Church at Ely, in Cardiff, has a very lively and harmonious relief carving, in wood, on one of its walls; whilst the Chapel of the Capuchin Friary at Pant-Asaph in North Wales has 'portraits' of all of the more important 'Franciscan' saints in its stained-glass windows. These are but a few examples of varying quality.

Tours, Fontaines, Auxerre, Montier, Bobbio, S. Gall, Taranta, and many more centres of Continental monasticism and culture were founded by Celtic monks between the 5th and 8th centuries and remained as places of pilgrimage and devotion well into the Middle Ages. Most of them were situated on the many routes across the continent to S. Peter's Tomb in Rome and may well have been known to S. Francis. Giotto and Cimabue, and many others, poets, painters, and sculptors were inspired by S. Francis' thinking and preaching. It still gives us a lot to think about!

To conclude I shall refer you to one of my favourite pictures, probably one of the most popular and well-loved favourites of all Western art. It is to be found on one of the walls of the Upper Church of the Basilica of S. Francis at Assisi, and it is entitled 'S. Francis Preaching To The

Birds’. It was painted by Giotto towards the end of the thirteenth century. Seven hundred years have since passed, and this and the accompanying frescoes continue to give joy and inspiration to all who are fortunate enough to be able to go to see the original works.

Sources:

Italian Art, Andre Chastel, Faber, 1963 (English edition); *From Prehistory to the Thirteenth Century*, David Talbot Rice, Thames and Hudson, 1967; *European Painting and Sculpture*, Eric Newton; *A Concise History of Art*, Germain Bazin, Thames and Hudson, 1962; *Florence in the Age of Dante*, Paul G. Ruggiers; *They Built on Rock*, Diana Leatham, The Celtic Art Society, Glasgow, 1948; *S. Francis of Assisi*, W. J. Knox Little, Isbister and Co. Ltd., London, 1897; *In the Steps of S. Francis*, Ernest Raymond, Rich and Cowan Ltd., London, 1938; *Saints, Seaways and Settlements*, E. G. Bowen, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1969; *Early Christian Ireland*, Maire and Liam de Paor, Thames and Hudson, 1958.

Francis . . . an Icon

BY BROTHER ANGELO S.S.F.



MANY legends and folk-tales have inspired much of the imagery in pictures of Saint Francis; so that a cowed figure singing along with the larks, arms filled with daisies or cuddling a rabbit, and trailed by a benevolent looking wolf or simpering deer is the frequent romantic and (over) sentimentalised outcome.

No-one reading the *Canticle of the Creatures*, the earliest extant poem in the Italian vernacular, could doubt Francis' attitude to the created universe as the expression of the beauty, love, power and generosity of God; with each cosmic element possessing its own profoundly spiritual splendour. But to over-exaggerate that is not only to come perilously close to pantheism, but also to obscure the central fact of the individuality and uniqueness of all created things, held in balance with the one-ness of the whole. In the *Canticle* 'we glimpse the image of an inward, sacred presence; the whole mystery of the soul's inviolable depths is present at the heart of matter'.¹ All is summed up by S. Bonaventure who writes 'Everything comes from the same source'.²

1 'The Canticle of Creatures', Symbols of Union, Eloi Leclerc O.F.M., p. 4.
2 Bonaventure VIII.6.

A little of this is seen in Francis' sermon to the birds at Bevagna; a scene so dearly loved by the Maestro di San Francesco, Giotto and Benezzo Gozzoli, and countless other artists both good and bad. The saint says

' My little sisters . . . many are the bonds which unite us to God. And your duty is to praise Him everywhere and always because He has let you free to fly wherever you will, and has given you a double and threefold covering . . . Praise Him likewise for the food He provides for you without your working for it, for the songs He has taught you, for your numbers that His blessing has multiplied, for your species which He preserved in the ark of olden time, and for the realm of the air He has preserved for you. God sustains you without your having to sow or reap . . . the fountains and streams to drink from, mountains and hills in which to take refuge, and tall trees in which to build your nests . . . How the Creator must love you to grant such favours! So, my sister birds, do not be ungrateful, but continually praise Him who showers blessings upon you '.¹

And a little more in a perceptive, challenging and new interpretation of the legend of the wolf of Gubbio, perhaps the second favourite of the romantic artists; this American author writes

' Francis felt sympathy for the wolf. There was something of the wolf in all of nature; that ravenous hunger, that restless pursuit, that baring of the fangs, so symbolic of what was wild and violent in all of us. But he saw in the wolf not so much the stalker as the stalked. Everyone feared wolves and disliked them; and he saw in the eyes of wolves a fear, a hunted look, an anger that wanted to devour everything in sight in order to avenge their own hurt and alienation. Wolves, after all, were like men. If you feared them and ostracized them and excluded them, they eventually turned into what you were afraid they were anyway . . . Francis thought of Cain fleeing east of Eden, branded, an outcast, cut off from society '.²

It is tragic that spiritual and psychological insights like these are often submerged in the sentimentalism of some artistic presentations of the scenes.

Given the opportunity (and talent) to choose any art medium to produce a lasting memento of Francis of Assisi, the icon would be my choice; because it is a window from our world to the invisible world of faith and the Spirit. It is not an image of a physical man but of the force of the Spirit in whichever human being the icon represents. ' It is a witness of respect and veneration, without any adoration, properly speaking, as that should be reserved for God '.³

Such an icon must of course include a miniature picture of the Franciscan ' sancta civitas ', the holy city of Assisi whose coat-of-arms

¹ 1.Celano 58., Fioretti XVI., Bonaventure XIII.3.

² ' The Journey and the Dream ', Murray Bodo O.F.M., p. 71.

³ VII Council.

would also be included since it consists of three hills or mountains, surmounted by a Cross. Each of the hills would have at some point a cave with a tiny picture scene inside it.

The first would be Monte Subasio, the graceful curves of which form the backcloth to the city of Assisi itself, and on the lower slopes of which lies the city. Higher up, between the two blunted tips lies the hermitage of the Carceri. The original cave where Francis prayed and slept remains untouched except for the protective walls built by Bonaventure, and later extended by Bernadine of Siena. There are few art 'treasures' here; in one chapel a Giottoesque fresco of the Crucifixion, in another chapel a second Crucifixion of much earlier dating (ca. 1060) partly hidden by a 15th century Madonna and Child, an exquisitely carved door to an aumbry, these are about all. The main beauty of the Carceri lies in its quietness; in the wood of holm-oaks which surrounds it, the floor of which is carpeted in season by crowds of wild miniature cyclamen. The silence here, broken only by the inevitable birds, has the almost tangible quality sought and cherished by the early Friars as the setting for creative prayer, and the growth of the ever-deepening awareness of the presence of God, essential to those who would attempt to live the Gospel life. This must be renewed again and again, Francis taught his Friars, and they developed it in places like this, S. Urbano at Narni, Fonte Colombo, Monte Casale, La Verna and others. This withdrawn, hermit aspect and tradition has been preserved and runs like a thread through the growth of Franciscan spirituality down the ages; hermitages that are power-houses of silence and contemplation. Not for all the saint's followers of course, because not all could live for long without the company of other men, in conditions which, in a sense, held up a mirror before them.

'Francis knew that to some of the brothers the mountain-man in him seemed fanatical and nothing more than an endurance test. He feared, too, that some of them were too frail to follow him to the mountain . . . Sometimes he saw in their eyes that frightened lonely look that said simply that they had followed him to the mountain to find what he had found, but instead had found only themselves. It was then that he felt closest to them; for that void, that emptiness, was the prelude to being filled with *the Mountain Man*, with Christ Himself. At that point they were finally free of Francis and ready to meet Jesus'.¹

The second hill would be that 'wood grown cliff above Greccio; a steep hill, honeycombed with caves and surmounted by a small wood'.

¹ Murray Bodo O.F.M., p. 133.

It was here in one of the caves, on the Feast of the Incarnation of Christ,

‘that the manger was prepared, the hay had been brought, the ox and the ass were led in. There simplicity was honoured, poverty exalted, humility was commended, and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem’.¹

This was not only a brilliant illustration for Francis’ sermon on the Incarnation but also an expression of those virtues so evident in the saint’s own life, and on which his whole Order was founded—simplicity, poverty and humility.

Francis and his first brethren taught people to re-discover the human Jesus; one who was friend, companion, the brother with whom one says ‘Abba, Father’, and with whom it was, and is, possible to have a close personal relationship, cultivated by prayer and lived out in the human situation. So that the joys and sorrows of human life become a sharing of the joys and sorrows of Christ Himself.

It is particularly interesting to see the change in art forms during, and immediately after the time of Francis. Byzantine art, the influence of which was waning about then, represented Christ the Saviour as a stylised, remote, unmovable and somewhat austere figure, part king, part judge. Even the Crucifixion figures reflected this in the cold appraising look about the open eyes. Francis’ own time, the ‘bridge’ period between this and the birth of Renaissance art, sees the gradual change to the human suffering Jesus; a change influenced by the gradual appearance of a specifically Franciscan spirituality which was, above all else, Christocentric, whose influence not only altered the course of the Church’s development in the west, but also affected art, architecture, literature and scholasticism in the universities of Europe.

Whilst never losing sight of the cosmic Christ in whom the whole of creation moved towards fulness of redemption, Francis was called and motivated by the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus. Throughout his whole journey from the vision of San Damiano to the mystical appearance of the Stigmata at La Verna, it was this passionate love for his Lord which drew the saint on and was expressed in his care for lepers, outcasts and any others who were in any way separated from the fulness of life to be found as a part of the Church—the mystical Body of Christ. The lifestyles of San Damiano, Rivotorto, and the Portiuncula in the early days were the outward signs of the acceptance by the *frati minori*, those ‘lesser brothers’, of the simplicity, poverty

¹ I.Celano 85.

and humility of the Jesus who 'emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross'.¹

Which reference to the Cross leads us on quite naturally to La Verna, that mountain in Tuscany given to Francis and his brethren in 1213 by Count Orlando as 'an ideal site for the practice of contemplation and penance'. That the saint should ultimately arrive here and undergo the experience which left him carrying the marks of the Crucified in his own body seems inevitable when one studies the life he lived from the day that the vision of San Damiano charged him to 'go and rebuild my Church which is falling into ruin'. We tend to think of this as the great 'conversion' moment for Francis but he obviously did not, since he starts his Testament, which has been described as 'the shortest and most comprehensive autobiography ever written'² with these words

'This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but God led me into their company, and I had pity on them . . .'.³

Clearly, in his own eyes, Francis' life is divided into two parts; all that went before the incident of his kissing the leper was his life of sin, and everything after it was the life of penance. His view of penance was more than simply sorrow over sin, it was an awareness of having offended our heavenly Father, caused the death of our Saviour, and grieved the indwelling Spirit: the affirmation of such responsibility required acts of penance performed with a generous desire to do something to make up for the offence against God and the loss caused to His glory. For Francis nothing less than a *life* of penance would do; a life activated by two motives—compassion for the suffering Christ, and atonement for the world's sin as well as his own. These attitudes influenced many sculptors and painters who produced statues such as that of Collina-Graziani at La Verna (a blind Francis resting one wounded hand on the book of the Gospels), and the cycle of frescoes in the Lower basilica at Assisi with scenes from Christ's life facing those from the life of Francis—the one named 'The Passion of Christ' and the other 'The Compassion of Francis'—by the Maestro di San Francesco; and many crucifixion scenes by the brothers Della Robbia have Francis kneeling at the feet of Jesus on the Cross.

¹ Phil.2. vs. 7 & 8.

² 'In the Spirit of S. Francis', Theodosius Foley O.F.M., Cap.

³ 1.Celano 17., Bonaventure 'Leg:Maj' II.6.

Francis seems to have embraced the words of S. Paul

‘It is true at this moment that I am suffering on behalf of you who have heard the Gospel, yet I am glad, because it gives me a chance to contribute my own sufferings to the uncompleted pains by which Christ suffers on behalf of His Body the Church’.¹

This roots Francis’ attitude in scripture, and opens up a whole vast expression of that compassion for Christ which seems naturally to lead to the Stigmata on La Verna. It was supported, and expressed in its own way, by the Sisters—the Poor Clares; as it was by the members of the Third Order (or Tertiaries) who were specially referred to by Francis as ‘the brothers and sisters of penance’.

The Cross therefore would surmount the three hills on my icon as it does on the coat-of-arms of the city of Assisi, perhaps bearing a Christ figure similar to that of Fra. Innocenzo of Palermo whose ‘miraculous’ crucifix hangs in the side chapel at San Damiano. For my figure of Francis I should choose none of those traditional representations which are well known; instead I should have, in a central position, hands outstretched to the Cross above him, a picture of the statue now standing in San Francisco. Following the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the second of the Kennedy brothers to be killed in this way, many people had their guns melted down for the casting of this statue known as ‘S. Francis of the Guns’. I choose this as a symbol of the saint’s uncanny ability to reach across the years to touch the hearts of men today as an ‘instrument of peace’.

The figures of Clare, and perhaps Elizabeth of Hungary for the Third Order, would occupy the lower corners; and in a central position at the base would be an altar holding Eucharistic vessels, since this has always been the focal point of all Franciscan prayer and worship. It is at the altar that all are united in commitment, community and the bearing of the Cross: First, Second and Third Orders become one in the Lord they all serve in their own vocations. It is here that community and personal prayer come together, with that of the Church, in thanksgiving; and where daily is affirmed that intimate union with God that all share. With the inclusion of such an altar my icon would be complete.

The things to be represented I have listed, adding only that the miniature scenes in the caves of the mountains would be, for Subasio

¹ Colossians 1. v. 24.

the church of San Damiano with its original 12th Century 'talking' crucifix; for Greccio a nativity scene, perhaps similar to the 14th Century fresco of the Umbro-Sienese school on the wall of the north transept of the basilica of Santa Chiara, and which captures the sense of poverty so dear to Francis. For La Verna obviously one would choose one of the paintings of the Stigmata, possibly that of Pietro Lorenzetti, a fresco in the north transept of the Lower basilica of San Francesco. These three are the significant milestones in the development of a Franciscan spirituality based upon commitment, community and the Cross.

For colour brown, by tradition, but with touches of blue and green that the three together might symbolise the Creation. Splashes too of purple for the penitential aspect; red for a reminder of the Passion; and finally one or two touches of shiny gold leaf to reflect light as Francis, the 'mirror of Christ' reflected the divine light of his Master. All of these I choose because,

'The icon is a visible sign of the splendour of invisible presence . . . it has no existence of its own. It guides us to what really is'.¹ And 'it is this capacity to point beyond itself, while remaining the absolutely and necessary medium of what it signifies, that we refer to when we speak of its revelatory capacity . . . it is in its nature to lure us on, away from itself'.²

By such a standard, Francis, whose whole life was a 'transparency' through which others might look to see Christ, is himself a perfect icon.

¹ 'L'Orthodoxie', Paul Evdomikov, p. 219.

² 'The Art of God Incarnate', Aidan Nichols, O.P. pp. 98—99.

Corn of Wheat

by Mother Elizabeth C.S.F.

The story of the foundation and subsequent history of the Community of Saint Francis up to the present time. With a foreword by Bishop John Moorman. Illustrated by Sister Gwenfryd C.S.F.

Available from The Community of S. Francis, Compton Durville, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5ES. £3.50 per copy, plus 50p packing & postage.

Galilee

*A poem by Joanna Helen Kane
written in Israel
in July, 1978 at 10 years of age*

The glistening lake
Ripples in the cool breeze of the evening
Enveloping all things
That dwell in its path.
The faint dim sunlight
Sparkles on the crystal blue sheet.

One bird glides across
The glistening mere,
Gently flapping
Snow-white wings
Against the clear air,
Beating it down.
On its head
A crowning plume of feather
Proudly stands.

Some trees stand tall and straight,
guarding their territory like soldiers.
Green blankets of undergrowth
Cover the dun earth,
And crumpled leaves
Coat it.

Tiny snails hide among the criss-cross leaves
—camouflaged are their shells
Of all shades of the night—
Sleeping inside their spiral conches
With the faded sun bringing light.

In the water
Rainbow-coloured fish
Flip their scales of armour
From side to side,
Weaving in and out
Of the pointed rocks.
They gulp down sea-weed and plankton,
And their mouths open and close like snap-dragons
As they move along the sea-bed.

Flowers bloom with multi-coloured petals,
And sapphires are their heads.
Their roots suck juices
From the dry, hard, hot ground,
And their stems are olive-green.

Piercing eyes glow in a shadow.
Out leaps a fox.
Its ginger coat like bristles
Stands upright as it moves
Swiftly along the straw-yellow grass.
Its ears are pinned back,
And it fox-trots along.

On a rock nearby
A lizard slithers,
His long tail straight and flat behind him.
He rushes to hide,
Slinking in the shadows,
Lying in wait,
Lurking for flies.
One buzzes
Round his head.
He does not move,
But his eyes move accordingly.
Suddenly his long tongue
Whips out and curls in mid-air.

All is silent.

A dash of colour darts from behind a tree.
Galloping down
To the water's edge
Is a wild ibex.
Her tongue laps up the salty drink
Which is foaming on the edge,
Quenching her thirst.
Her ears lie flat on her head,
Listening for any sound of danger.
Her eyes twinkle in the last light of day,
And she runs off
—A blur of fur
Freely running,
Tearing the air,
Beautiful deer—
Runs into the wild depths of the forest,
Leaving a trail of hoofprints
Silently behind her.

The Sun is nearly down,
And a red glimmer ends the day.
The painted trees
Bow to the ball of fire,
And everything is quiet.
The story-book closes
Its pages of mixed beauty.

Into the dark motionless night everlasting.

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Books

Poverty

A Camel in the Needle's Eye. *By Benoit Charlemagne O.F.M. (Cap.).*
S.C.M., 181 pp., £3.95.

This is Brother Benoit's first book; it tells of a particular pilgrimage, his own, in following Christ in the way of S. Francis. In it he describes how he had to break free from the structures of the Capuchin Order, from whom he had been given permission to take up the path of extreme penury.

Of course he does not write of his own courage though to his readers that is exactly the strength of his book. He writes with all the excitement of his French culture, describing the places, notably around India and the United States and finally ending up in the city of Guatemala at the time of the earthquake in 1976. He writes in vivid literary style which his translator captures charmingly (you can never forget his origins), but always he writes with the point of driving home his theme—Christ came to share the life of the poor. So too Brother Benoit is there, in each chapter, searching for, staying with, befriending, and learning from the very poor, the outcast, the wretched, both at considerable cost and personal hurt.

He is not starry-eyed about poverty. Neither does he forget to acknowledge the privilege of being a priest and a brother. With a loving family behind him and a Church and Community who still own him, his security makes him like a camel in the needle's eye, while also providing him with his stamina and opportunity. During a time of fasting and solitude in the heart of a Puerto Rican ghetto Benoit tells of his being at one in his search with so many brothers and sisters—from monks and nuns in their convents right down to alcoholics and drug addicts 'all found themselves coming up against the same mystery, the same source of hope: a Presence, an Absence, something or someone, a God whom some call by name and some dare not hope for' (p. 172).

A similar search brought Brother Benoit to Belfast in Advent, 1981, when he quietly repeated this offering of fast and prayer in our troubled Province. Thank God our paths crossed. He witnesses to everything I read from his book.

DAMIAN S.S.F.

New Society

In Place of Work . . . The Sufficient Society. *By David Bleakley.*
S.C.M. Press, 1981, 119 pp., £3.95.

In seven short chapters we have here a historical sketch of the first Industrial Revolution, its effects on those caught up in it, the indifference (on the whole) of the contemporary church to the wholesale degradation of God's children which it brought about. In addition, there is a description of what is happening to industrial society in the fields of

production and employment, and of what is needed if these changes are indeed to result in 'The Sufficient Society' and the liberation of men and women from the bondage of a life whose material support is directly linked with the earning of wages by work which is not worthy of the name.

It cannot but be, then, a slight and

inadequate sketch of a theme which deserves serious treatment—yet, one thing which is stressed again and again is the speed of the changes which are taking place around us, and the urgency of the practical measures which need to be taken. A message which all must hear and act upon has to be stated briefly and emphatically, and this the author has succeeded in doing.

From the argument it is clear that the earth's resources can only be used in the creation of the sufficient society, if they are released from the creation of means for society's destruction—otherwise the new technology will simply accelerate that destruction. Another high priority is education—we must learn to live a new and ever changing life if the fruit of the new sufficiency is to be freedom for personal fulfilment, and

not anger, frustration, and social unrest.

None of the desired changes will come about, however, without a radical change of *heart* on the part of human society—there is a certain facile optimism in the idea that we learnt to be selfish in the competitive struggle imposed on us by the capitalist system; that disarmament and the silicon chip will between them establish heaven on earth. The burden of this book (not always explicitly stated) is that we stand in urgent need of *God*.

All readers of *THE FRANCISCAN* should make these concerns a part of their thinking, praying, and action—and should read this book, which comes from the pen of a leading layman of the Church of Ireland.

ANSELM S.S.F.,
Minister Provincial.

All Life in God

The Practice of Prayer. *By George Appleton.*
Mowbrays Popular Christian Paperbacks, £1.50.

Bishop Appleton opens up to the reader his living, converting relationship with God through prayer, in the hope that others will pray with him and find both encouragement and guidance. He leaves the initiative in everything with the Trinitarian God, not seeking to instruct, to promote particular methods, or to suggest that he is an expert. The approach he uses is appropriate and helpful: forty short meditations, with a prayer leading out of each one.

Starting from the premise that prayer is the most important work which any of us can do, as a witness and manifestation of our faith in God, Bishop Appleton suggests that, through making space and time available for God, we shall discover His will for us, and receive His grace to put it into practice. He outlines some signposts which will be found in most sorts of prayer. We

should follow Jesus, both in relating to the Father as we were told in the Lord's Prayer, and in calling upon Jesus as our advocate. We can pray the Word of God, as revealed in the Bible, and in the history and wisdom of the Church. We can pray from our personal experiences, be they rooted in fears and angers, pressures of activity, or joys and excitements. The whole of life, here and in heaven, is taken up in God, and flows through us from God, in the self-offering of worship and adoration. As we become more aware of God, we shall be moved to penitence, and to the freedom and thankfulness knowing that we are forgiven in the power of His love.

For all Christians the way is pointed to commit ourselves more fully to exploring our own rich spiritual tradition, in the promise of Pentecost. In this we should beware of exclusivity of

form, looking for the positive value of all the prayers of faith, in God's world. Ours is the hope that, if we seek, we shall find; or, as Bishop Appleton suggests, we have been found, and it is for us to discover the path to our true home. Thereby we shall begin to realise the Kingdom of God, and so become reconciled to our deepest self, the self which we are meant to be. This

requires discipline, openness, and surrender to God's will. No easy task. This book shows how we might attempt this, whether we lead very busy lives and are complete beginners, or whether we are hardened in the religious life. I enjoyed reading it, and I shall try to continue to pray it.

JULIAN S.S.F.,
Novice.

Some Franciscan Books

S. Clare of Assisi. *By Nesta de Robeck.*

Franciscan Herald Press, 242 pp. + vii, U.S. \$7.95.

A reprinting by the Franciscan Herald Press of the 1951 edition of this valuable work.

This is a very welcome and timely re-appearance of a much loved work,

well-known to previous generations of Franciscans. Simply and beautifully written it is based on primary sources and includes valuable appendices and notes.

Three books from the Tau Series:

The Tau: A Franciscan Symbol. *By Damien Vorreaux O.F.M.*

(translated by Marilyn Archer O.S.F. and Paul Lachance O.F.M.).

Franciscan Herald Press, 86 pp. + vii, illustrated, U.S. \$7.00.

A delightful examination of the historical background, the theological and spiritual significance of the tau cross. The immediate and remote influences which affected S. Francis' devotion to the tau are unfolded like a detective story. This is a rich tapestry beautifully executed. The reader is exposed to some forgotten aspects of

faith in the middle ages and shown something of the continuity of the tau as a symbol in art. We come to see how much more this meant to Francis than is at first obvious. It is the symbol of 'his devotion not only to the Cross but to the whole Christ and the total mission of Christ which is expressed' through this sign (p. 70).

First Encounter with Francis of Assisi. *By Damien Vorreaux*

(translated by Paul Schwartz and Paul Lachance).

Franciscan Herald Press, 87 pp. + vi, U.S. \$5.95.

In a small compass this charming and challenging book tries to answer the question of the last eight hundred years: why is Francis so continually attractive?

Francis is set in the historical context which gave birth to him and then we are shown how Francis 'discovered the secret of how to set the universe into a

state of praise and fraternity' (p. x). A well documented account is given of how Francis came to be 'seized by Christ' and in the telling we are brought face to face with Francis the man. On this basis Vorreaux explores the 'spiritual universe of Francis' in such a way as to open up for us the continuing mission and charism of the Franciscan movement.

The Gospel Life of Francis of Assisi Today. By *Thaddée Matura O.F.M.*
(translated by Paul Lachance O.F.M. and Paul Schwartz).
Franciscan Herald Press, 111 pp. + x, U.S. \$7.50.

It is a joy to recommend this book in its English translation. Many members of S.S.F. will remember the author when he was a member of the little Franciscan family associated in the seventies with Taizé.

For members of S.S.F. this book would be an excellent study book to be used as we follow up the 'Gospel Now' conference of 1981. Father Matura explores with spiritual insight the unique experience which Francis had and lays bare the radical way in which he lived it out. The movement which sprang out of that life touched Europe at almost every level of its life.

Like all movements of the spirit Franciscanism has become institution-

alised with the passage of time. This also applies to S.S.F., and is most seen where it is most vigorously denied. How are we to recapture the primitive charism and translate it into a suitable lifestyle in our age? This is the question which Thaddée faces and as he unfolds in fresh language the charism of Francis he illuminates the Franciscan values for today calling us to a life characterised by 'flexibility, mobility, concentration on basic values' and which is 'presence to God, and fraternal contact with men and women sought for its own sake' (p. 107). There is much here to be prayed over, pondered, and acted on. I recommend this book most highly.

✠ JOHN-CHARLES S.S.F.

All of the above books may be obtained from
Franciscan Herald Press, 1434 West 51st Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60609, U.S.A.

Saint Francis of Assisi. By *Lawrence Cunningham, photographs by Dennis Stock.*
Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, 126 pp., profusely illustrated in colour and black and white, U.S. \$20.95.

Of all the books I have so far seen which are commemorative of the 800th anniversary of the birth of S. Francis this is the most exquisite.

The illustrations, both Stock's photographs and those which are reproduced from the Scala photographic archives in Florence, are sumptuous. They are matched by the jewelled text of Professor Cunningham, a world authority on Francis. There is also a splendid collection of miniature black and white illustrations.

The book is composed with a judicious blending of comment, narrative and original sources, expressed in polished phrases and sharpened with incisive comment. The text is masterly. I am delighted to have collected the descrip-

tion of the basilica of S. Mary of The Angels: 'a colossal monument to good intentions and execrable taste'.

The evocative landscapes with which the book opens set the scene and promote Franciscan reflection. They are followed by a collection of the most famous 'portraits' of Saint Francis. These bear witness to the extraordinary influence of Francis on the artistic work of two centuries. Cunningham in due course refers to both this and the remarkable influence of Franciscanism on literature.

Most of the major documents which can be regarded as Francis' own work are presented and there is an astonishing sampling of the major biographies which is though economic yet wide-

ranging and should drive readers to dig more deeply. In fifteen pages of print Cunningham gives us what must be one of the most tightly compressed but compellingly beautiful lives of Francis. This is brilliant historical prose.

Stark adds to this his photographs of Assisi and other Franciscan sites. These are dramatic, reflective, and useful for meditation. They are an essay in their own right.

Lawrence Cunningham, in his chapter 'Lady Poverty and Mother Earth', discusses the heart of Francis' faith, his appeal for his own times, and the message of the saint for today. This despite its brevity is a major exercise, in interpretation. He discloses Francis as a 'lover of particularities'. He makes it impossible for us to hide from poverty by calling it 'simplicity'. For, it is abundantly clear that for Francis 'living in the radical insecurity of poverty was

the ultimate act of living faith in the providence of God and the promises of Christ' (p. 58).

There is added to all of this an essay on the Franciscan Revival, an annotated chronology, and a guide for further reading.

Two errors are regrettable: the description in one caption of a friar as a 'Franciscan monk'; and the mistaken assertion, which applies neither to the United States nor England, that Anglican Franciscanism was started in 'the more evangelical wing of the Anglican Church', though it is true that in England it was much influenced by the Christian socialists (see p. 108).

This is a book which justifies superlatives in description and recommendation. I hope that many Franciscans will acquire it, use it, treasure it, and be guided by it.

✠ JOHN-CHARLES S.S.F.

Note: American books reviewed in THE FRANCISCAN may conveniently be obtained in England from

R.P. Book Service, Alphonsus House, Chawton, Alton, Hants GU34 3HQ.

Books Received

The Reviews Editor gratefully acknowledges receipt of the following publications:

Dr. Pusey, Restorer of the Church, by A. G. Lough, Privately; **Hearts not Garments**, by Michael Hollings, D.L.T.; **Jesus and the Constraints of History**, by A. E. Harvey, Duckworth; **I'm Smiling as Hard as I Can**, by Pennie Kidd, Mowbray; **The Play of Wisdom**, by A Sister O.S.B., Mowbray; **A Pocket Calendar of Saints**, by Kenneth C.G.A., Mowbray; **The Restless Apostle: Don Orione's writings**, D.L.T.; **Jesus, Liberation and Love**, by Mark Gibbard S.S.J.E., Mowbray; **Crying in the Wilderness**, by Desmond Tutu, Mowbray; **Daily Prayer in the Early Church**, by Paul F. Bradshaw, Alcuin Club



S. Francis' cell at Celle di Cortona.